

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF IRAN

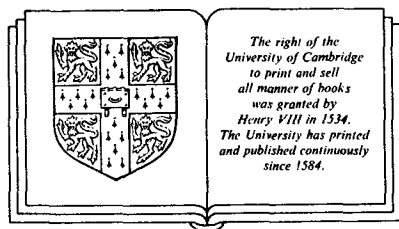
Volume 3(I)

THE SELEUCID, PARTHIAN
AND SASANIAN PERIODS

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CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF IRAN UNDER THE ARSACIDS

THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES

The history of the Parthian kingdom presents a special problem, since the sources on which it must be based are both fragmentary and extraneous. In the present state of knowledge, information originating from authentic Parthian sources is scanty in the extreme. Almost all the particulars available are derived from histories written in either Greek or Latin. Both the Seleucid kings of Syria, and the Roman republic and empire, the patrons of the majority of writers concerned with this subject, were frequently at war with Parthia, so that the tone of the writings is naturally often tinged with hostility. Yet more serious for our understanding than direct hostility (which could easily be discounted) is their lack of inner understanding of Parthia and its society. Such matters as the dominant Parthian ideals and aspirations, or the ethnic and linguistic make-up of the kingdom, would not have been apparent to uninformed observers under the stress of military operations. Moreover, the literary fashion of the classical world frowned on detailed descriptions of far-away peoples and places, as is clear from the scornful comment of Lucian¹ on the author of a Parthian history “who gives, according to his own idea, the clearest, most convincing description of every town, mountain, plain or river . . . Why, Vologesus’s breeches or his bridle, God bless me, they take up several thousand lines apiece.” Some at least of these supposedly unnecessary details would have the greatest interest for the present-day historian. Yet it is only occasionally that the prevailing narrowness of outlook of the classical historians is offset by details supplied by authors resident in the Greek cities within the Parthian state, and thus possessing closer acquaintance with the Arsacids and their society. Fragments from the lost *Parthica* of Apollodorus of Artemita, a Greek city of eastern Iraq, are often quoted in the *Geography* of Strabo.² Tarn believed that the detailed account of Parthian history contained in books XLI and XLII

¹ Lucian of Samosata, *The Way to Write History* (*Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*), 19.

² See W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1951), p. 44.

of the lost *Historiae Philippicae* of Pompeius Trogus¹ derived from a second Greek author, distinct from Apollodorus. Much of their content survives, though greatly abbreviated, in the *Epitome* of Justin, a work therefore indispensable for historians of Parthia, even though the failings of the epitomator are frequently blamed. The account of the overthrow of the Roman general Crassus at the battle of Carrhae narrated in Plutarch's *Life of Crassus* is thought to be derived from a Greek resident of Mesopotamia. Again, Isidore of Charax (the Hellenistic city at the head of the Persian Gulf) wrote the short but valuable itinerary *Parthian Stations*,² thought to be an extract from a longer work, the *Description of Parthia* mentioned by Athenaeus.³ Isidore is dated to about the beginning of the Christian Era. Interesting details of the experiences of a visitor to Parthia some forty years later are found in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Otherwise the chief sources for the history of Parthia are the occasional notices given by such western historians as Polybius, Dio Cassius and Tacitus.

These classical literary sources can be supplemented to some extent by epigraphic and documentary evidence. Certain inscriptions in Greek from Bisitūn in Iran,⁴ and from Susa, refer to the affairs of the Parthian kingdom. There are also a number of lapidary inscriptions in Parthian⁵ and Aramaic. A further source of authentically Parthian information which is likely to increase as archaeological research advances is supplied by the finds of ostraca with Parthian inscriptions. The largest volumes so far have been excavated at Nisā in Soviet Turkmenistan,⁶ and are concerned chiefly with arrangements for the delivery of consignments of wine. They contain information on land tenure, qualities of wine, official titles, and occasionally the names and regnal dates of rulers. Minor finds, of different content (some probably ration-lists or nominal rolls) have come from Dura-Europos in Syria, from Nippur in Iraq, and in Iran from Shahr-i Qūmis near Dāmghān.⁷ Such ostraca are probably common objects on Parthian sites, and future finds should

¹ *Ibid.* p. 45. For Trogus see O. Seel, *Pompeius Trogus: fragmenta* (Bibliotheca Teubneriana), Leipzig, 1956.

² Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations*, ed. and tr. W. H. Schoff, 1914.

³ *Deipnosophistae* III. 93d.

⁴ E. Herzfeld, *Am Tor von Asien* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 36f; W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci inscript. selectae* I (Leipzig, 1898), 641.

⁵ At Sar-i Pul-i Zohāb, J. de Morgan, *Mission scientifique en Perse* IV (Paris, 1896), pp. 154-6 and figs. 144 (f), 145; G. Gopp, "Die parthische Inschrift von Sar-Pul-e Zohāb", *ZDMG* CXVIII (1968), pp. 315-19.

⁶ Dyakonoff and Livshits, *Dokumenty iz Nisy*.

⁷ A. D. H. Bivar, "The first Parthian ostrakon from Iran", *JRAS* 1970, pp. 63-6.

give valuable information on Parthian chronology and dynastic Parthian titles. Parthian official titles indeed present considerable interest: *nwhdr* "commander" (or the like),¹ a term of which the association with this Parthian frontier is confirmed by the district name Beth Nuhadrā in northern Iraq;² *pšgryb'* "successor" known from inscriptions at Hatra and at Urfa (Edessa);³ and perhaps even the Syriac term *bwdr* (*bdr*), thought to reflect a Parthian word *bgdr* "custodian of the deity".⁴

There exists another source of information especially typical of the Arsacid Parthians, but not always easy to interpret in strict historical terms. This is the oral poetry of the Parthian minstrels, who were known in Parthian by the term *gōsān*.⁵ Some of their poems dealt with historical or epic themes, and have been preserved through incorporation in surviving poems in modern Persian. Among such survivals are the narratives of Rustam and of Godarz – relating in fact to events of Parthian times – preserved in the section of the *Shāh-nāma* dealing with the reign of Kai Kāvūs, and thus out of their true chronological context. Another Parthian survival is represented by the romantic poem *Vīs u Rāmīn*, which, as Minorsky has shown,⁶ contains many details which suggest an Arsacid background, but can hardly be referred to any precise historical context.

The scattered nature of the sources for Arsacid history, and in particular the relevance of many brief mentions in the longer works of classical authors devoted primarily to other themes, makes a guide to the relevant literature essential for the modern student. Gutschmid's basic work⁷ remains useful, but contains several misleading theories and should not be accepted uncritically. That of Debevoise is still probably the most complete and up to date for this purpose, though its rather prosaic style makes continuous reading laborious. It is used extensively in the pages that follow. The author's coverage of the periodical literature is especially thorough. Rawlinson's older account, though

¹ W. B. Henning, "A new Parthian inscription", *JRAS* 1953, p. 136; A. Maricq, "Hatra de Sanatrouq", p. 6 n 1.

² E. Honigmann and A. Maricq, *Recherches sur les "Res gestae divi Saporis"* (Brussels, 1953), p. 124; E. Herzfeld, *The Persian Empire* (Wiesbaden, 1968), p. 228.

³ Maricq, pp. 4ff.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 143.

⁵ Boyce, "The Parthian *gōsān*", p. 17. See also pp. 388–91 and 1155 ff. in this volume on Parthian oral literature.

⁶ V. Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn", in *Iranica: Twenty Articles* (London–Tehran, 1964), pp. 178–88.

⁷ A. von Gutschmid, *Geschichte Irans und seiner Nachbarländer* (Tübingen, 1888).

naturally dated, is still of considerable service. The most recent full-length discussion of Parthian history is that of Neusner, whose emphasis is on the Jewish texts and Jewish connections, and inevitably in other respects finds the classical sources much as they had appeared to earlier writers.

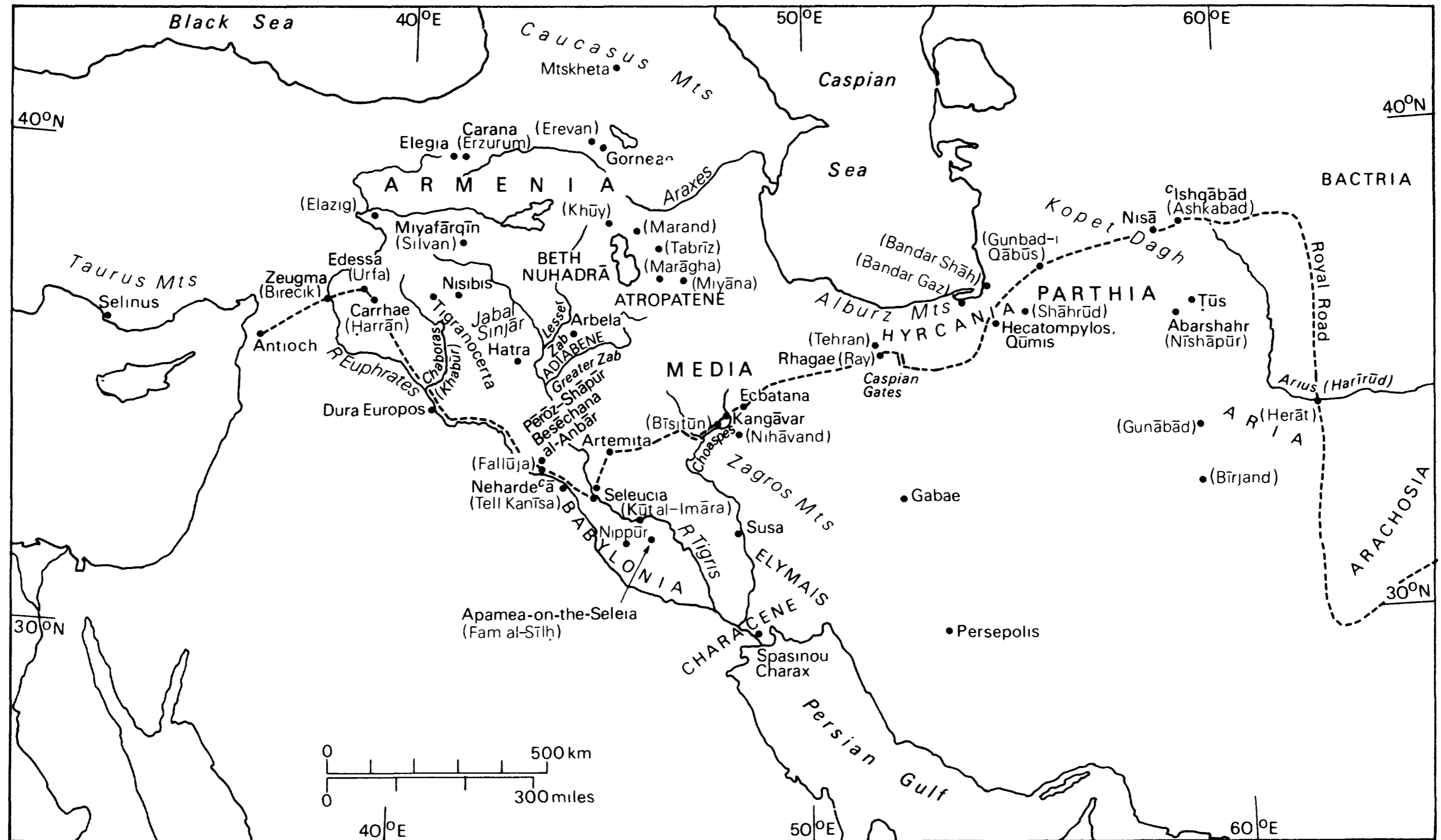
THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The ancient satrapy which once occupied the north-east angle of present-day Iran, and overlapped the boundary of Asiatic Soviet territory, had been known under the name of Parthava since the days of Darius' Bisitūn inscription (521 B.C.), and indeed long before.¹ Yet its borders, which no doubt grew and shrank with the vicissitudes of history, are none too easy to define in detail. Under Darius, Parthia and Hyrcania formed in some sense a unit, as we may infer from their juxtaposition in the text of the inscription: *Parθava: uta: Varkāna: hamiçiyā: abava: hačāma* "Parthia and Hyrcania became rebellious towards me." Both were then the concern of Vištāspa, satrap of Parthia and father of the king. The two towns of Višpauzāti and Patigrabana lay within the boundaries of Parthia, but their sites are unknown today. For the amalgamation of Hyrcania and Parthia there are indications also in late Seleucid times. The ancient western boundary of Hyrcania, the modern Gurgān province, lay, if we may depend on evidence of the Sasanian period, at the south-east corner of the Caspian Sea, more precisely along the Sasanian wall of which the traces can still be seen running from between the villages of Sarkalāta and Kārkaṇda towards the sea a few kilometres east of Bandar Gaz.² Between Hyrcania and Parthia proper the line must have run through the hills lying east of the present town of Gunbad-i Qābūs, but is not easily fixed at any point upon the ground.

Southwards from its junction with Hyrcania the investigation of the boundary of Parthia raises different problems. In the inscription of the Sasanian Shāpūr I, drafted towards A.D. 260, a distinction is made between the provinces of Parthia and Abarshahr. The latter is the earlier name of the city which has come to be known as Nīshāpūr, but which some authorities have sought to derive from the name of the Aparni, a tribe soon to assume a prominent place in our story. It is

¹ For references going back to the time of Esarhaddon, c. 673 B.C., see Debevoise, p. 3.

² A. D. H. Bivar and G. Fehérvári, "The walls of Tammisha", *Iran* IV (1966), p. 40.



Map 1. The Parthian empire (for other locations see map 14, p. 748).

possible that the Sasanians deliberately separated Abarshahr from the remainder of Parthia. There is, however, no hint of its existence as a separate administrative unit under the Achaemenians, and Herzfeld invoked a passage of the Arab geographer Yāqūt as evidence that under the Arsacids the province of Parthia extended as far south in Khurāsān as Gunābād and Bīrjand.¹ This hypothesis was to some extent supported by the discovery of inscriptions in Parthian at Kal-i Jangāl near Bīrjand.² To the westward, the natural boundary of the province was formed by the historically famous pass of the Caspian Gates, securely fixed by modern research in the defile of Sar-i Darra, 87 kilometres east of Tehran on the old Khurāsān road.³ Thus in the south-westerly direction Parthia surrounded Hyrcania on the southern side. On the eastern flank, the dividing line from Aria, the province of Herāt, will have run on or near the lower course of the Harīrūd, and close to the present frontier of Afghanistan. By the combination of several texts, Herzfeld was able to infer that the city of Tūs was the capital of the Achaemenian province of Parthava. Presumably it was therefore the residence of Vištāspa, the father of Darius, who was satrap of that province according to the Bīsītūn inscription.

North of the Kopet Dāgh range, beyond the present-day frontier of Iran with the U.S.S.R. but again within the ancient Parthia, ran a narrow strip of cultivable land watered by streams from the mountains. This is the area served today by the line of the Trans-Caspian railway. By the end of the 3rd century B.C., if not indeed earlier, considerable towns were beginning to form in this region. The two ancient settlements of Nisā ("Old" and "New" Nisā) lay a few miles to the west of the present city of Ashkabad (Ishqābād) in Soviet Turkmenistan. Further to the east was the ancient site of Abīvard, at Kuhna Abīvard, 8.5 kilometres west of the railway station of Kahkala (Kākhka) on the Trans-Caspian railway. Also in this same ancient district of Apavarcti-cene, it may be inferred, lay the stronghold of Dara, built by Tiridates I of Parthia (see below, p. 769). Northward from the mountain fringe stretched an arid steppe, the home of the nomadic peoples who were to play the dominant part in the subsequent history of the Parthian kingdom. The first explicit mentions of this nomad confederacy, the Dāha (Latin "Dahae"), come in the list of nations of the famous

¹ Herzfeld, *Persian Empire*, p. 322.

² Henning, "A new Parthian inscription", p. 132. According to R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (London, 1962), p. 194, the correct form of the name should be Kal-i Janggāh.

³ Herzfeld, *Persian Empire*, p. 317; cf. J. Hansman, "The problems of Qūmis".

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

“Daeva” Inscription of Xerxes at Persepolis, and in Yasht 13.¹ They are followed in the list by a “Scythian” group, the Saka Haumavarga, whose habitat was around the delta of the Jaxartes, modern Syr Darya; and who are thus appropriately listed as neighbours of the Dāha. Amongst the various tribal groups included in the confederacy of the Dahae, the most prominent were the Parni, also called the Aparni, from among whom the dynasty of the Arsacids drew their origin. Lesser tribes, of whom mention is made, were the Xanthii and the Pissuri. So far as the linguistic affinities of these peoples are concerned, it is plausible to assume that the north-west Iranian dialect that is known in a later period as “Parthian” should be the original dialect of the Iranian cultivators of the province of Parthia. To the incoming Parni may rather be ascribed a form of speech showing a stronger east Iranian element, resulting from their proximity on the steppe to the east Iranian Sakas. Instances of east Iranian loan-words surviving in Parthian have been discussed by Henning.² They recall the phrase of Justin,³ no doubt slightly exaggerated: “Their speech was midway between Scythian and Median, and contained features of both.”

The tribal group of the Dahae bequeathed their name to the province on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, which throughout the Islamic Middle Ages retained the designation of Dihistan, even though its original occupants had disappeared. It was the regular medieval custom in Iranian-speaking lands for the provincial name to be applied to the headquarters city (e.g. Gurgān, Kirmān). In the case of Dihistan, this name has become attached in later usage to no less than three of the towns: to one on the Caspian coast; to the old provincial centre of Ākhur in Soviet Turkmenistan, twenty-three farsakhs (some seventy miles) north of Jurjān, modern Gunbad-i Qābūs; and to a place called by the Arab geographers Ribāṭ, later Mashhad-i Miṣriyān, the well-known Islamic fortified site in the same territory.⁴ However, there are no reports of archaeological finds relating to the Parthian period from any of these places, and the urban centre of the ancient Dahae (if indeed they possessed one) is quite unknown.

¹ H. Lommel, *Die Yäshts des Awesta* (Göttingen/Leipzig, 1927), p. 129 n2 (= Yašt 13 [Farvardīn Yasht]: 144). T. Burrow, “The Proto-Indoaryans”, *JRAS* 1973, pp. 137–8, dates this text shortly before c. 900 B.C.

² Henning, “Mitteliranisch”, p. 93.

³ Justin xli. 1: Sermo his inter Scythicum Medicumque medius et utrimque mixtus.

⁴ A. M. Pribytkova, *Material of the architecture of Turkmenia* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 143–8.

IRAN UNDER THE ARSACIDS

THE BEGINNING OF ARSACID RULE

The first fixed point in Parthian history is provided by the starting-point of the Arsacid era, the vernal equinox of 247 B.C. The significance for the Parthians of this moment in time has been variously explained: by Gardner¹ it was seen as the date of a Parthian revolt against Seleucid suzerainty; by Tarn, as the coronation year of Tiridates I, the second Parthian king.² Another evident possibility is that it could represent the actual enthronement year of Arsaces I, the founder and eponym of the dynasty. However, this less sophisticated theory has until recently proved difficult to reconcile with the literary accounts relating to the foundation of the Arsacid kingdom. The plausibility of yet a fourth explanation for the origin of the era in 247 B.C. should also not be lost to view. Since the year 246 B.C. was the last of the reign of Antiochus II over the Seleucid empire, and allowance has moreover to be made for the autonomous reign of the satrap Andragoras in Parthia, it may be that 247 B.C. was reckoned the last year of legitimate Seleucid authority in the province, and that Arsaces subsequently backdated his regnal years to this moment and ignored the unconstitutional episode of Andragoras.

The literary sources for the rise of the Arsacid dynasty have recently been re-examined in a series of articles by Wolski.³ Whilst the view had previously prevailed that the tribe of the Parni rose against the Seleucid authority in about 250 B.C., or at any rate shortly before 247 B.C., this scholar embarked upon a detailed source-criticism of the ancient texts which refer to the event, and has concluded that the version provided by Justin and Strabo⁴ is a distinct tradition, and superior to that represented by the fragments of Arrian's *Parthica* in Photius and Syncellus, and the statements of Eusebius. In Wolski's view, therefore, the authentic version is that the Seleucid satrapy of Bactria established its autonomy of the Seleucid kingdom in about 239 B.C. under its governor Diodotus; and that Arsaces established his independent rule in Parthia in the following year, 238 B.C. Shortly afterwards must have taken place the inconclusive eastern campaign of the Seleucid ruler Seleucus II Callinicus. After a number of skir-

¹ P. Gardner, *The Parthian Coinage* (International Numismata Orientalia Part v) (London, 1877), p. 3.

² W. W. Tarn, "Parthia", *CAH* ix, p. 576.

³ Wolski, "L'effondrement de la domination des Séleucides", and more especially "The decay of the Iranian Empire of the Seleucids". ⁴ Strabo xi. 9. 2; Justin xli. iv.

mishes with the Parthians, he was obliged by further disturbances in Asia Minor to return to Antioch, and leave the newly founded Parthian kingdom to its own devices. In Wolski's opinion, indeed, "The so-called Arsacid era and the numismatic evidence are of no importance" for the question of chronology.¹ Such an attitude may be thought extreme; yet if Wolski's interpretation of the literary sources can indeed be reconciled with a satisfactory explanation of the inauguration of the Arsacid era, as on the lines suggested above, it would be possible to arrive at an acceptable sequence of events.

Accordingly, we might conclude that the epoch of 247 B.C. marks rather the commencement of the bid by Andragoras for power in Parthia than that of Arsaces and his Parni. The historicity of Andragoras is confirmed by the discovery of his gold and silver coins in the Oxus Treasure² and more recently, by a Greek inscription published by Robert.³ The latter, indeed, refers to Andragoras as a satrap already under Antiochus I, and suggests that he may have held his office for nearly twenty years before he was overcome by the Parni. This circumstance makes it less likely that the satrap's rule could have been prolonged to so late a date as 238 B.C.

According to what may have been regarded as the traditional account, the revolt of the Parni against Andragoras was led by two brothers, Arsaces the founder, and Tiridates; the latter is the Tiridates I of the Arsacid dynastic table. After the death of Arsaces, at a date not precisely known, Tiridates succeeded to the throne. He reigned until about 211 B.C., shortly before the eastern campaign of Antiochus III the Great. His successor, who apparently occupied the throne during the hostilities against Antiochus, was Artabanus I. The peace terms eventually agreed by the Parthians with Antiochus involved their formal acceptance of a feudatory status; but the rapid withdrawal of the Seleucid forces when Antiochus returned to the west, and in 189 B.C. sustained defeat at the hands of the Romans in the battle of Magnesia, meant that in fact the young kingdom was subjected to little interference. In about 191 B.C. Artabanus was in turn succeeded by his son Priapatius.

The sketchy nature of the historical sources for these opening

¹ Wolski, "Decay of the Iranian Empire", p. 36. Cf. Lukonin's discussion, pp. 686 ff. below, which tends to confirm Arrian in some respects. Ed.

² *BMC Arabia etc.*, p. ccliii; Alfred R. Bellinger, "The coins from the Treasure of the Oxus", *ANSMN* x (1962), 66.

³ L. Robert, "Inscription hellénistique d'Iran", *Hellenica* xi-xii (1960), 85-91.

decades of the Arsacid kingdom has given rise to a number of sceptical hypotheses. One of these regarded the first Arsaces as a legendary figure, and tended to ascribe to Tiridates I the chief role in the establishment of the kingdom. Another interpretation, which was developed by Wolski, involved the assumption that Tiridates was legendary, and that in fact the first Arsaces reigned for more than thirty years. Moreover, Wolski rejects the historicity of an "Artabanus I" at this period, and interprets to the letter the statement of Justin (xli 5. 6) that the son and successor of Arsaces was known by the same name.¹ The majority of recent commentators accept Wolski's view, and commence the Arsacid dynastic list with Arsaces I and II. Yet plausible though this reasoning seems, the scanty evidence seems hardly sufficient to establish conclusively either of the two hypotheses or wholly to eliminate the possibility that certain elements of truth could be present in both the main historical traditions. Accordingly, the accompanying dynastic tables include both the older chronology, and that based on the views of Wolski, and subsequently elaborated by Le Rider. Moreover, the ostraca discovered in recent years at Nisā have tended to weigh against the more recent theories. Whilst the ostraca contain only fragmentary data of interest from the viewpoint of political history, such indications as they do provide harmonize satisfactorily with the "traditional" narrative. The text which has been most widely discussed for its historical implications in this connection is Ostrakon No. 1760.² It will be helpful to quote here the reading of this document which was proposed by Dyakonov and Livshits:

ŠNT i c xx xx x iii iii i 'ršk MLK' BR Y BR[Y Z]Y (?) Pryptk
BR Y 'HY BR Y ZY (?) 'ršk

"In the year 157 of King Arsaces, grandson of Priapatius, (who was) son of the nephew of Arsaces".

Each of the succeeding Arsacid rulers was known during his lifetime by the throne-name Arsaces, a custom which does nothing to facilitate the work of the historian or numismatist.³ None the less the Arsacid

¹ Wolski, "Arsace II", *Eos* xli (1946), 160; Wolski, "Arsace II et la généalogie des Arsacides", *Historia* xi (1962), 145.

² Dyakonoff and Livshits, p. 20. Cf. M.-L. Chaumont, "Les ostraca de Nisa", *JA* (1968), p. 15; Bickerman, "The Parthian ostrakon no. 1760 from Nisa", each offering a slightly different reconstruction. [See p. 687 below for further evidence from the ostraca.]

³ Cf. Strabo xv. 1. 36. Ἀρσάκαι γὰρ καλοῦνται πάντες, ἰδίᾳ δὲ ὁ μὲν Ὀρώδης, ὁ δὲ Φραάτης, ὁ δὲ ἄλλο τι. "Every one of them is named Arsaces, but individually one is Orodes, another Phraates, and yet another something else."

date, *anno* 157, included in the text fixes it to the year 91 B.C., and thus suggests that the ruler under whom it was written would have been either Mithradates II (c. 123–88/7 B.C.) or Gotarzes I (91–81/80 B.C.) whose reigns overlapped at this time during several years. Mithradates II was indeed, and Gotarzes I may well have been, grandsons of Priapatius, and the latter in turn a nephew's son of the first Arsaces. The historicity of the first Arsaces, and the general correctness of the succession, as transmitted by the classical historians, is thus confirmed. The genealogical table compiled by Frye is based on these assumptions,¹ but those offered by Chaumont and Bickerman depend on somewhat varied interpretations, and must be subject to reservations. There seems at any rate sufficient justification for accepting the traditional version of events: that Arsaces, chief of the Parni, and perhaps originally a local ruler in Bactria, crushed Andragoras, veteran satrap of Parthia and Hyrcania in about 238 B.C. and mastered those provinces. He repelled the punitive expedition of Seleucus II, and was succeeded by his able brother Tiridates. The latter in turn was succeeded by his son Artabanus I, who opposed the invasion of Antiochus III in 209 B.C. Artabanus again was succeeded by his son Priapatius, who reigned for fifteen years to 176 B.C., and bequeathed the throne to his eldest son, Phraates I. Under the reign of the latter, the expansion of the Parthian kingdom began once more.

The incursion of Antiochus III had interrupted the Arsacid control of that part of the province of Parthia which lies south of the Alburz Range around Dāmghān and Shāhrūd. Phraates I not only reasserted Parthian jurisdiction up to the Caspian Gates, but even beyond; for he was able to establish a garrison of Mardians, tribesmen of Māzandarān, at the strongpoint of Charax immediately on the western side of the Gates.² Thus he prepared the way for the Parthian advance into the province of Media, still at this period a strongly held outpost of the Seleucid empire with its headquarters at Ecbatana, the modern Hamadān. However, the conquest of Media for the Parthian kingdom was to remain a task for his son and successor, the mighty Mithradates I, whose accession to the throne is reckoned to have taken place in about 171 B.C., and who is to be considered the real author of Parthian expansion to the rank of a world-empire.

¹ Frye, *Heritage of Persia*, p. 294. Cf. Lukonin's reconstruction, p. 688 below.

² Isidore of Charax, *Parthian stations*, p. 7.

IRAN UNDER THE ARSACIDS

THE EXPANSION OF ARSACID POWER

Meanwhile, in 175 B.C., a grandiose personality, the Seleucid Antiochus IV Epiphanes, had seized the Syrian throne at Antioch to avenge the assassination of his brother Seleucus IV Philopator. Sensitive to the threat which the Parthians represented to his eastern provinces, he devised (if the thesis of Tarn be accepted)¹ an elaborate scheme to restore the situation. In Bactria, he raised the formidable figure of Eucratides to expel the princes of the Euthydemid house who were no more than rebels in his eyes. As governor of Media he installed his powerful minister Timarchus, whose later alliance with Eucratides is evidenced by the parallelism of their coins.² It was not until nearly eight years later, when the position of Eucratides was well established, that Antiochus himself moved to take charge of operations in the Seleucid east. He was successful in reducing King Artaxias of Armenia to vassalage, and the attribution of the name Epiphania to Ecbatana has been linked with his activity.³ None the less, the imprecision of the ancient sources makes it difficult to construct an intelligible narrative of his subsequent movements in Iran. He is said to have coveted the treasures of a temple of Artemis (Nanaia) in Elymais;⁴ to have tried to get possession of them by the device of a ritual marriage to the goddess, an expedient that had been employed elsewhere; to have been repelled by the indignant citizens; to have been driven out of Persepolis by a rising of the inhabitants;⁵ to have returned to Ecbatana, and to have been gravely injured in a fall from his chariot. Finally he is said to have died at Tabae,⁶ which must be

¹ Tarn, *Greeks in Bactria and India*, pp. 196–8.

² For the coins of Timarchus, especially the tetradrachms with the helmeted bust and reverse type of the Dioscuri, see Le Rider, *Suse*, pp. 332–4.

³ Stephanus Byzantinus, *De Urbibus*, s.v.

⁴ 2 Maccabees i. 13–15, seemingly confirmed by Polybius xxxi. 9. 11, since the Greek authors regularly speak of Nanaia (Anahita) as Artemis. Yet the apparent implication of 2 Maccabees that Antiochus himself was killed on this occasion must be untrue, and it is better to follow 1 Maccabees vi. 4 (presumably narrating the same episode) which asserts that Antiochus IV fled from the city where the temple stood.

⁵ According to 2 Maccabees ix. 2, the city in which Antiochus had sought to despoil the temple was Persepolis. It is not, however, clear whether this is a different episode from that noticed above; or whether, since 1 Maccabees vi confusedly states that Elymais was a *city* in Persia, all these allusions refer to a single episode.

⁶ Tabae is actually situated in western Anatolia, some ninety miles south-east of Ephesus, and can have no connection with these events. There is no evidence for a place of similar name in Iran, and the best commentators make the small emendation in Polybius xxxi, 11, 3 to Gabae. For a commentary on the last days of Antiochus IV, see especially M. Holleaux, *Etudes d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques*, III, Paris, 1942, pp. 264–7; Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 311. The discussion by Tarn, *Greeks in Bactria and India*, pp. 463–6, is interesting, but a little arbitrary.

corrected to Gabae, the old name of Jay, now a suburb of Iṣfahān. His death took place between 20 November and 18 December 164 B.C., and whatever the exact sequence of events during his last months, he was never in a position to embark on military operations against the steadily growing power of Parthia.

Meanwhile Mithradates I, the real founder of Parthia as a major power, had ascended the Parthian throne, and was awaiting the time when his plans for the expansion of his kingdom could be put into effect. To the east he had to face the powerful Graeco-Bactrian ruler Eucratides. Not only did Mithradates secure his own frontier, but he succeeded in annexing the Bactrian eparchies of Tapuria and Traxiana. To the south-west, in Media, was the ally of Eucratides, Timarchus. Though the latter was soon overthrown by the new Seleucid claimant, Demetrius I Soter, it is likely to have been more than a decade before the situation was ripe for the definitive Parthian advance. Numismatic studies have shown that after the fall of Timarchus, coins were struck at Ecbatana not only for Demetrius I (161–150 B.C.), but also during the opening years of Alexander Balas (150–145 B.C.).¹ The advance of Mithradates against Ecbatana has been placed in 148 or 147 B.C., a conclusion which finds confirmation in the Greek inscription associated with the figure of Heracles uncovered a few years ago at Bīsītūn:²

In the year 164 and the month Panēmos
Hyakinthos, son of Pantaukhos
[erected this statue of]
Heracles Triumphant
for the safety of Kleomenes,
Viceroy of the Upper Satrapies.

Here the year 164 of the Seleucid era corresponds to 149/8 B.C. ($312 - 164 + 1 = 149$), and the month Panēmos is the seventh of the Macedonian calendar (of which the year began in October), so that Panēmos in general terms would have fallen in June 148 B.C. At this moment it appears that a Seleucid viceroy still held office in Media, but his safety was giving rise to anxiety so acute as to prompt the erection of such a dedication. The occupation of Media by Mithradates I may have taken place at any time after this moment, but the indications are that the interval was not more than a year, and may well have been a matter of weeks.

¹ G. K. Jenkins, "Notes on Seleucid coins", *NC* 1951, p. 8; Le Rider, *Suse*, pp. 338–40.

² For the Greek text, cf. 'Alī Ḥākīmī, "Mujassama-yi Hirkūl dar Bīsītūn", *Majalla-yi Bāstānshināsi* III and IV (Tehran, 1338/1959–60), pp. 3–12; Robert, *Gnomon* 1963, p. 76; Robert, "Encore une inscription grecque de l'Iran", *CRAI* 1967, pp. 283, 291.

Meanwhile, the involved struggles for the Seleucid succession at Antioch were sapping the control of the dynasty over its outlying provinces, and preparing the way for a further advance of Mithradates. For an understanding of the circumstances of Parthian expansion at this moment, it is necessary to give a summary of events in the Seleucid kingdom. After the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, his cunning minister Lysias made the accession of his son, the child-king Antiochus V Eupator, the pretext for an exercise of his own authority. The elder cousin Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome, effected his escape to Syria, was acclaimed as king, put both child and minister to death, and crushed Timarchus as already described. But twelve years later Alexander Balas, claimed as the second son of Epiphanes, was set up against him as a pretender, and supported by Ptolemy Philometor of Egypt. In 150 B.C. Demetrius met his fate in battle against the new claimant. Yet the reign of Balas was to last only five years. Then the eldest surviving son of Demetrius Soter, a youth in his teens, and also named Demetrius (II), raised a force of Cretan mercenaries and landed in Syria. Balas made the mistake of quarrelling with his Egyptian patron, who switched his support to Demetrius, and in the ensuing battle Balas was routed, and a few days later hunted down. Ptolemy, who took part personally in the battle on the side of Demetrius, was fatally wounded, so that Demetrius II remained in complete control of the Seleucid kingdom. He was able to secure recognition of his rule at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, where four coin issues have been attributed to him.¹ Susa, however, had passed in 147 B.C. into the power of Kamniskires, the king of Elymais, and was never again recovered by the Seleucid authorities.²

As early as the late summer of 145 B.C. the military commander Tryphon set up an infant son of Balas, Antiochus VI, as king in opposition to Demetrius, and even gained possession of Antioch. Demetrius meanwhile held the greater part of the Syrian coast. Then in the east during 141 B.C. Mithradates invaded Babylonia and occupied Seleucia. Tetradrachms are attributed to him in the series of this mint for the year 141/40 B.C., and there are dated issues for the years 140/39 and 139/8.³ Mithradates then withdrew to his residence in Hyrcania, but his forces pressed on southwards to defeat the army of Elymais at Apamea near the modern Qūṭ al-‘Amāra. Soon afterwards the Parthians were able to occupy Susa, where coins were again struck for Mithradates. Meanwhile, appeals for help from the Greeks of Babylonia

¹ Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 150.

² *Ibid.* p. 75.

³ *Ibid.* p. 364.

reached Demetrius in Syria, and "in the hundred threescore and twelfth year"¹ ($312 - 172 + 1 = 141/0$ B.C.), that is to say, during the spring of 140 B.C., he gathered a force and moved into Babylonia and perhaps Media. Apparently Demetrius II hoped not only to recover these provinces from the generals of Mithradates, but also to raise in the east loyal reinforcements with which he could return to overcome the usurper Tryphon. None the less, his audacity and some early successes were in vain. In the following year (139 B.C.), defeated and taken prisoner by one of the Parthian generals, he was paraded through the cities which the Parthians had won. Finally, Demetrius was sent to Mithradates in Hyrcania. The Arsacid not only treated him kindly, but while holding him as a prisoner, even gave him his daughter Rhodogune as a wife.

After the capture of Demetrius II, resistance to the generals of Mithradates was at an end in Babylonia. The Persians, the Elymaeans and, it is said, the Bactrians had made common cause with Demetrius, and it was against the Elymaeans that the Parthian troops were now unleashed. Their temples, both of "Athena" and of "Artemis", the latter known as the Azara, were pillaged, it is said, of ten thousand talents of treasure; and their capital city, Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, was taken.² This was the moment, in the closing months of Mithradates' reign, when the Parthian empire attained for the time its maximum extent. According to the account given by the late author Orosius,³ "He defeated the governor of Demetrius and invaded the city of Babylon, and all the boundaries of its province. Furthermore he subjugated all the provinces which lie between the Hydaspes and the Indus." Some commentators have sought to identify the Hydaspes here with the river of that name, now the Jhelum, situated in the Punjab. Yet it is hardly possible that the power of Mithradates extended so far into the kingdom of the Graeco-Bactrian kings. More probable is the view which links the name Hydaspes here with the "Median Hydaspes" of Virgil.⁴ Here the name seems but an alternative for the Choaspes, the modern Karkha, which indeed rises in the mountains of Media. And the territory won by Mithradates thus extended from the Karkha along the shores of the Persian Gulf to the mouth of the Indus in Sind.⁵

¹ *Ibid.* p. 361.

² Strabo XVI. 744.

³ I. 2, 18.

⁴ *Georgics* IV. 211.

⁵ Cf. P. Daffinà, *L'immigrazione dei Sakā nella Drangiana* (Rome, 1967), pp. 41-3.

IRAN UNDER THE ARSACIDS

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE PARTHIAN KINGDOM

The reign of Mithradates I came to an end in 138/7 B.C., the first precisely established regnal date of Parthian history. His rule had been both long and prosperous, lasting as it did for more than forty-three years. During his last months, however, a new threat was growing to the rising power of Parthia, and this was to become the chief pre-occupation of his immediate successors. Disturbances along the area of the Chinese frontier had set on foot a large-scale westward migration in Central Asia. The powerful tribal confederation of the Yueh-chi, apparently identical with that known to the classical writers as the Tochari, had been attacked by their Altaic neighbours the Hsiung-nu (ancestors, it seems, of the later Huns), and driven pell-mell from their grazing-grounds in Kansu province. The Yueh-chi emigrated westwards, probably by way of Turfan and Qarashahr, and along the Ili River. In the course of their march they collided from time to time with another formidable horde, the Wu-sun, who may have been identical with the Issedones mentioned by Herodotus and other classical writers. Finally, passing Lake Issik Kol, the Yüeh-chih emerged from the mountains once more onto the steppe, defeating and driving before them the Saka tribes who had pastured there since the days of the Achaemenian empire. These Saka peoples seem to have been of eastern Iranian speech, and may well have included ancestors of the Afghans, the present-day speakers of Pashto.

Thus it came about that the displaced Sacae, of whom the group most prominently mentioned was that of the Sacaraucae (Saka rawaka), began to impinge on the Parthian boundaries early in the reign of Phraates II (139/8–c. 128 B.C.). They may indeed have already appeared in the last days of Mithradates I. Yet before matters reached a crisis on the eastern frontier of Parthia, Phraates was faced with a fresh onslaught from another direction.

In Syria, the usurper Tryphon continued to rule over the greater part of the country, with his main strength in Apamea and in Antioch. Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy Philometor of Egypt, who had been married to Demetrius II who was now captive, held out in Seleucia-in-Pieria on the Syrian coast. Despairing of making headway alone against the usurper, she called in her brother-in-law Antiochus, the younger son of Demetrius Soter who had been brought up at Side, and offered him her hand. Thus Antiochus was acclaimed king, becom-

CONSOLIDATION OF THE PARTHIANS

ing known to historians as Antiochus VII Sidetes. Commanding as a legitimate claimant the loyalty of the Macedonian population, he soon overcame Tryphon, and once more succeeded in unifying the Syrian kingdom. Then in 130 B.C. he mustered a powerful army, which one account claims consisted of eighty thousand foot,¹ and for which other sources allege the incredible total of three hundred thousand, and set out to expel the Parthians from Babylonia. At first his boldness was rewarded. Antiochus defeated the Parthians in three battles. In one, on the River Lycus (Greater Zāb) he overcame the Parthian general Indates. Enius, the Parthian governor of Babylonia, was massacred in a rising of the citizens. At Susa, a little-known usurper named Tigraios had been issuing copper coins from 137 B.C. to 133/2 B.C., when a sporadic issue in the name of Antiochus is recorded for the mint. Antiochus advanced into Media, where, as winter drew on, he sent his army into winter quarters. Already men began to speak of him as the Great King.

In the circumstances that prevailed, the large numbers of the Seleucid force no doubt proved something of an embarrassment. It was necessary to disperse them among the several cities, and even then the feeding of them became a burden for the inhabitants. Nevertheless, the situation of Phraates II and the Parthians looked dangerous, and emissaries came to Antiochus to discuss terms for a settlement. The attitude taken by the young king was uncompromising. Peace would not be made unless the captive king Demetrius was set free, unless the Parthians relinquished all territory outside the province of Parthia, and once more paid tribute to the Seleucids as in former times. Understandably, Phraates broke off the negotiations. But he released Demetrius, and sent him home to Syria, in the hope of creating a diversion in Antiochus's rear.

As the spring of 129 B.C. came in, the cities of Media became restive under the burden of supplying the Seleucid garrisons, and moreover they were oppressed by the general Athenaeus. The agents of Phraates found it an easy task to stir up the citizens to attack the Seleucid troops, disorganized now by the inactivity of the winter. When Antiochus hastened out with his household troops to support the nearest detachments, he was surprised by the appearance of the main Parthian force. He sustained the attack against the advice of his officers, found himself left alone when his men were put to flight, and so lost his life. The

¹ Justin xxxviii. 10. 2.

great Seleucid army was thus completely routed, and captured or slain almost to a man. The number of killed was put at the prodigious figure of three hundred thousand, but as the aftermath shows many were taken prisoner. Amongst them was the young Seleucus, son of Antiochus Sidetes, later brought up as a prince at the Parthian court; and the daughter of Demetrius, who found a place in the royal harem. As for the body of Antiochus, it was treated with all possible honour, and returned to Syria for burial in a silver coffin.

After his victory over the Seleucid, Phraates had determined to advance on Syria. But the Saka invasion on his eastern frontier obliged him to abandon this plan. Already during the war with Antiochus VII, Saka mercenaries were being enlisted for the Parthian armies. For them, the sudden end of the campaign came as a surprise. Finding that they had arrived too late to take part in the fighting, the nomads were reluctant to accept dismissal without wages, and demanded either that their expenses should be paid, or that they should be employed against another enemy. When both were refused, the Sakas fell to ravaging Parthian territory, and some are said to have penetrated as far west as Mesopotamia. The main body of their tribesmen were pressing on behind, and already, so it seems, had swept away the Greek settlements in Bactria. Now the chief preoccupation of Phraates was to repel the advancing Sakas. Just as he had tried to divert *their* ferocity against the Seleucid forces, so now he pressed the prisoners from the army of Antiochus into service to oppose the new invaders. He may have counted on the fact that they would be facing unknown foes in a strange land, and would have to fight for their lives. But when the armies met, and the Greeks saw that the Parthians were hard pressed, they deserted to the enemy. Thus the Parthians were overwhelmed, and in the slaughter which followed (128 B.C.), Phraates himself was killed.¹

The succeeding Arsacid ruler, Artabanus II (c. 128 B.C.–124/3) had again to contend with the nomad threat to Parthia. Yet problems arise from the statement of Justin that it was the Tochari against whom he waged war.² Since previously Phraates II had been engaged with the Sacaraucae, and it was known that the Tochari had been advancing behind the latter, and were thought at this moment to have been settled north of the Oxus, there is difficulty in the narrative which brings them into contact with Artabanus II of Parthia. Tarn indeed dismissed

¹ Justin XLII. 1.

² Justin XLII. 2.

as impossible the statement that the Tochari were involved with Parthia at this moment.¹ Yet where the sources are so fragmentary as for these incidents, and the detailed succession of events so little known, it is best to retain the evidence of the texts so far as possible. In any event, Artabanus is reported to have died in battle – against the Tochari – after receiving a wound in the arm, perhaps from a poisoned arrow. It is to his ultimate successor, Mithradates II (124/3–87 B.C.), later surnamed the Great, that credit must be given not only for securing the eastern boundaries of Parthia against the nomad threat, and even indeed enlarging them, but also for stabilizing the Arsacid administration in Babylonia, an area soon to become the very heart of the kingdom.

It was probably owing to the vulnerability of the old Parthian homeland around Nisā and Abivard to nomad raids by the fiercer tribes from beyond the Oxus that the headquarters of Parthian government gradually shifted westwards during the late 2nd and the whole of the 1st centuries B.C. Whether the official name of Mihrdādkert given to the city of Nisā originated with Mithradates I himself, or derived from some earlier, perhaps even Achaemenian, governor of that name, is perhaps still an open question, owing to the fact that a monogram which can be read as “Mithradātkert” appears on Parthian coins before the accession of Mithradates.² That ruler, according to the historical accounts, had frequently resided in the province of Hyrcania. The site of Hecatompylos in Comisene, south of the Alburz range, is called by several classical writers a Parthian capital,³ and has been located by recent research at Shahr-i Qūmis, near Qūsha, and 32 km to the west of Dāmghān.⁴ Further excavation at this site should establish with more precision the date, probably towards the middle of the 2nd century B.C., when this nowadays rather desolate site became a royal headquarters and winter residence. No doubt it was but a temporary stage in the steady progress of the Arsacid kings towards their ultimate capital at Ctesiphon in Babylonia. Yet owing to political vicissitudes of the 1st century B.C., during which Seleucia and Ctesiphon were frequently in the hands of pretenders to the throne, the move may not have become final until the reign of Gotarzes I (91–c. 80 B.C.).

¹ Tarn, “Seleucid-Parthian studies”, *PBA* xvi (1930) 115–16.

² M. T. Abgarians and D. G. Sellwood, “A hoard of early Parthian drachms”, *NC* 1971, p. 114.

³ Pliny, vi. 44: *Ipsum vero Parthiae caput Hecatompylos ...*

⁴ J. Hansman, “Problems of Qūmis”, pp. 131–3; Hansman and D. Stronach, “Excavations at Shahr-i Qūmis, 1967”, *JRAS* 1970, p. 61.

Indeed, occasional royal visits to Hecatompylos may even have continued until the accession of Orodes II in 58/7 B.C., and his subsequent capture of Seleucia from his brother Mithradates III directed the main aspirations of Parthia towards the west, as we shall see. For a summer residence the higher altitude of Hamadān (Ecbatana) was preferred from at least the time of Mithradates II (c. 124 B.C.).¹

After the victory of Phraates II over Antiochus VII the Parthian governorship of Babylonia, with its great capital of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, had been entrusted to Himerus, whose stern reprisals against the Macedonian element for their recent defection were the cause of bitter complaints. Meanwhile, at the mouth of the Tigris, a new state, that of Characene, was forming under the rule of the local governor Hypsaosines, who was not himself a subject of the Parthian king. Near the present site of Qurna at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates,² Alexander the Great had founded a vast city. After damage by floods, it had been restored under the name of Antiochia either by Antiochus III, or perhaps by Antiochus IV. With the lapse of Seleucid government, its satrap Hypsaosines found himself an independent ruler, and powerfully refortified the town, so that it acquired the name of Spasinou Charax, "the fort of Hypsaosines". When attacked by the Parthian governor Himerus,³ Hypsaosines at first got the upper hand, and is attested by cuneiform tablets to have gained possession of Babylon in 127 B.C. and also, it seems briefly, of Seleucia.⁴ Neither is he credited with mint-activity at Susa, where copper coins attest the constant adherence of the city to its Arsacid overlords. In 122/1 B.C. the newly enthroned Mithradates II arrived in Babylonia to settle accounts with Hypsaosines, whose copper coins he soon overstruck with the Parthian types in Spasinou Charax itself.⁵ Thus it appears that he completely overthrew the Characenian, yet nevertheless Hypsaosines returned to his throne, and the state which he founded continued to exist under Parthian suzerainty until the coming of the Sasanians in A.D. 224. Mithradates moreover waged war successfully

¹ Strabo xvi. 1. 16 (C 743): θέρουσ δέ ἐν Ἐκβατάνοις καὶ τῇ Ὑρκανίᾳ . . .

² Hansman, "Charax and the Karkheh", *IA* vii (1967), 36 ff.

³ A. Bellinger, "Hypsaosines of Charax", *YCS* viii (1942), 57; E. T. Newell, *Mithridates of Parthia and Hypsaosines of Characene* (ANSMNM no. 26), New York, 1925.

⁴ Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 382.

⁵ Newell, *Mithridates and Hypsaosines*, p. 8; cf. Le Rider, *Suse*, pp. 387-8.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE PARTHIANS

against Artavasdes I, king of Armenia; and the young Armenian prince Tigranes, taken to Parthia as a hostage on this occasion, was later, of course, to become the most powerful ruler of his line. It was no doubt also under Mithradates II that Parthian rule was re-established over the invading Saka tribes in the new territories which they had overrun in what is today Sīstān (originally Sakastān). Gradually the whole Helmand–Qandahār region, and even the Punjab as far to the east as Taxila, came under the sway of the Indo-Parthian dynasty, who ruled during the 1st century A.D. as allies and equals of the Arsacids in Iran. Though Herzfeld's elaborate reconstruction of the rise to power in this area of the Parthian house of Suren¹ is likely to correspond in very general terms with the true situation, it cannot be insisted upon for points of detail. In particular, his identification of the Vonones of the Indo-Scythian coinage, placed now by current research before 57 B.C.,² with Vonones of Parthia (A.D. 8/9–11/12) involves a manifest anachronism.

Perhaps the most significant changes in our understanding of Parthian history as a result of recent investigation relate to the career of the personality now known as Gotarzes I. Two poorly preserved rock-sculptures at Bīsītūn, at the foot of the rock upon which is carved the inscription of Darius, refer to this personage. That on the left, mutilated by a 19th-century Qājār inscription, can be reconstructed with the help of an early drawing by Grelot.³ It shows four notables standing before a king. The accompanying Greek inscription names the latter as "the Great King Mithradates", that is to say Mithradates II. The four notables are Gotarzes, satrap of satraps, one name illegible, Mithradates entitled in Greek *pepisteuomenos* "Privy Councillor", and Kophasates – an early form of the name Kohzādh. In this sculpture it is clear that Gotarzes was one of the highest royal officers during this reign. The sculpture on the right shows a scene of equestrian combat, and above the figure of the protagonist is the name *Gotarses Geopothros* "Gotarzes son of Gēv". Herzfeld, who had no knowledge of an earlier king named Gotarzes, ascribed the second relief to the ruler of that name (mentioned by Tacitus), who occupied the Parthian throne between A.D. 40 and 51.

¹ Herzfeld, "Sakastan", *AMI* IV (1931), 101.

² Since Jenkins, "Indo-Scythic mints", *Journ. Num. Soc. India* XVII (1955), 2, places this Vonones well before Azes I in the coin-series, and the Vikrama era of 57 B.C. apparently originated with the commencement of Azes' second reign.

³ Herzfeld, *Am Tor von Asien*, p. 36.

Babylonian tablets which were subsequently brought to notice by Debevoise¹ show that from as early as 91 B.C. a second Arsacid ruler, named Gotarzes, was actually in control of Babylonia. At the same time, the evidence of Josephus shows² that the Seleucid king Demetrius III Eucaerus, after a civil war with his brother Philip Epiphanes, was taken prisoner by a Parthian force that intervened on the brother's side, and sent to Mithradates II. Since the latest coins of Demetrius III are dated 88/7 B.C., it therefore appears that Mithradates continued to rule over certain parts of Iran, including apparently Media and Mesopotamia, while Gotarzes occupied Babylonia. Subsequently there is evidence that Gotarzes continued to rule until 81/80 B.C., when the name of a new ruler, Orodes I, begins to appear on the tablets. It is suggested that Orodes I reigned for a short time as rival to Gotarzes, who thereafter disappears from the record, so that Orodes is likely to have continued as sole ruler until about 76 B.C., when there is evidence that the next Arsacid, the elderly Sinatruces, must have been on the throne.

The attempt has recently been made to combine the findings of Debevoise on the Arsacid succession during this complicated period with the evidence of the coins.³ Later issues of Mithradates II show the royal portrait with long beard and jewelled tiara. The legends on the reverse read ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ "[Coin] of Arsaces, Great King of Kings, [divinely] Manifest", or on the final issue ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ "[Coin] of Arsaces, King of Kings, the Benefactor, the Just and Philhellenic". These coins are followed by an issue of a new ruler, whose energetic portrait is crowned with a plain diadem and whose inscription reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ "Arsaces, Great King, son of a deified father, Benefactor, [divinely] Manifest and Philhellenic".

As in the case of the great majority of Arsacid coin-legends and inscriptions, as we have already noted, the king is designated merely by the throne-name Arsaces, and the personal name does not appear, so that difficulties arise over his identification. Wroth, editor of the British Museum catalogue,⁴ attributed these diademed issues to a problematical "Artabanus II", in this following a speculative suggestion

¹ Debevoise, p. 48.

² *Antiquities* XIII, 384-6.

³ Sellwood, "The Parthian coins of Gotarzes I, Orodes I, and Sinatruces", NC 1962, p. 75.

⁴ Wroth, *BMC Parthia*.

of von Gutschmid.¹ Some of these coins with the diadem bear in addition to the usual legends the names of Iranian provinces, such as Traxianē, Margianē, Areia and also Katastrateian. The last term echoes a phrase in a Seleucid inscription of Anatolia,² τὸ κατά στρατείαν γαζοφυλάκιον “the expeditionary treasury”, and seems to refer to an itinerant mint and treasury organized to accompany the royal army on its campaigns. Recently a further legend of the same type, EN PAΓAIC “in Ray” has been reported.³ As early as 1930 Tarn rejected the attribution of these so-called “campaign coins” to the hypothetical Artabanus II,⁴ and ascribed them instead, with considerable insight, to an unknown “joint-king” and general of Mithradates whom he regarded as having been entrusted with campaigns against the Sacae in eastern Iran. The weakness of Tarn’s attribution lay in the fact that besides the campaign issues, coins of identical types without the special legends occur in the general Parthian series, and similar tetradrachms are reasonably plentiful. Since numismatists in general accept that (with isolated exceptions) tetradrachms of the Parthian kings were minted only at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, it follows from this that the mysterious “king of the campaign coins” not merely was a general entrusted with eastern campaigns, but ruled for a time over the entire kingdom, and even had control of Babylonia.

Sellwood therefore has combined the discovery of Debevoise, that a king named Gotarzes ruled the Parthian empire between 91 B.C. and 81/80 B.C. with the evidence of the “campaign coins”, and so attributes these, and the similar issues with diademed portrait, to Gotarzes. Not only will the latter then have established himself in Babylonia in competition with Mithradates II, but the coins would then also show that he conducted an ambitious campaign into the east of Iran, and reached not only Ray, but even distant Marv and Herāt, besides the little-known Traxianē. The hypothesis of Sellwood is certainly an attractive one, and suggests that the historical role of the first Gotarzes may have been more considerable than was previously realized.⁵ Plainly an earlier stage of this ruler’s career was as Satrap of Satraps on the left-hand rock-relief at Bīsītūn. The possibility may be

¹ Gutschmid, *op. cit.*, p. 81; criticized by Tarn, “Seleucid-Parthian studies”, p. 119.

² C. B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence of the Hellenistic Period* (New Haven, Conn., 1934), p. 98.

³ Sellwood, “Parthian coins”, p. 78.

⁴ Tarn, “Seleucid-Parthian studies”, p. 119.

⁵ [The author notes that since this chapter was written Sellwood has developed a new theory and now maintains that the King with a diademed portrait is later. See chapter 8(a), pp. 285 ff. for details. Ed.]

considered that the right-hand relief at that site refers also to him, and not to the later Gotarzes II, as Herzfeld supposed. At this point it is true that a problem arises, for the protagonist of the right-hand relief is labelled in Greek Geopothros "Son of Gēv", whereas on the coins attributed by Sellwood to Gotarzes I the king is entitled ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ "Son of a deified father", which implies that his father was a ruling Arsacid king. There could have been, however, no Arsacid king called Gēv.

On the other hand, that section of the *Shāh-nāma* which covers the reign of the legendary Kai Kāvūs narrates substantial episodes concerning a certain Godarz¹ who has a famous *son* by the name of Gēv, and whose saga no doubt represents an episode from the Parthian period.² Previously it was usual to identify the Godarz of the *Shāh-nāma* with the Parthian Gotarzes II (A.D. 43/4–50/1). However, the enlarged role which Sellwood's identifications suggest for the first Gotarzes might justify the transfer of the whole saga to the latter. It must be observed that Le Rider expressed reservations on Sellwood's transfer of the "campaign coins" to Gotarzes I.³ The following group, which portrays a ruler with a short beard and jewelled tiara, and of which the legend contains the Greek word ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΟΣ, Le Rider prefers to attribute to a later ruler, Sinatruces (77 to 71 or 70 B.C.), rather than Orodes I (c. 80 B.C.) with Sellwood. His reason is that it seems at Susa to contain eight or nine annual issues, while Orodes I would not have reigned so long. On this hypothesis, Le Rider cannot name "the king of the campaign coins", whom he is content to call Arsaces Theopator Euergetes. His objections to Sellwood's reconstruction still do not seem, in the present fragmentary state of the evidence, to be wholly decisive.

Whether or not Orodes I is to be credited with coins, and whatever the duration of his reign, Orodes I is briefly attested at Babylon by cuneiform tablets. After this reign, dynastic struggles in the Parthian empire were resolved by the return of the eighty-year-old prince Sinatruces⁴ from exile among the Sacaraucae on the eastern frontier. Despite his age, Sinatruces reigned for a further seven years. But when, in 72/1 B.C. Mithradates of Pontus requested his help in his war against the Romans, the aged king was in no position to assist. He died in

¹ J. C. Coyajee, "The House of Gotarzes: a chapter of Parthian history in the Shahname", *JRASB* xxviii (1932), 207–24.

² Cf. ch. 10(a), pp. 485 ff.

³ Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 392.

⁴ Lucian, *Macrobiol.*, 15.

71 or 70 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Phraates III. To Sinatruces, Sellwood attributes the drachmae with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΝΙΚΑΤΟΡΟΣ. The portrait wears a long beard, and a tiara decorated with a straight bull's horn, and a line of stags' heads along its ridge. No monogram appears upon this issue, and since it includes no tetradrachms, the implication seems to be, on this hypothesis, that Sinatruces may not have controlled, or resided in, Seleucia.¹

There is literary evidence that the succeeding ruler, Phraates III, used the title ΘΕΟΣ "the God", as of course had several Hellenistic kings before him.² The numismatic authorities are therefore unanimous in ascribing to Phraates the tetradrachms upon which the king wears the tiara decorated with a curved bull's horn, and which bear the Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ—together with corresponding drachms which omit the word ΘΕΟΥ, and a further series with the same legends upon which the king wears the diadem alone. However, the series mentioned in the previous paragraph, upon which the key titles are ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΝΙΚΑΤΟΡΟΣ, and which as we have seen are ascribed by Sellwood to Sinatruces, were regarded by Newell,³ and following him Le Rider, as the first of the issues of Phraates III. The correlation of the Parthian coinage after Mithradates II with the succession of historical rulers thus constitutes a problem of some complexity, to be examined in more detail in chapter 8(a).

It was, however, during the reign of Phraates III (c. 70–58/7 B.C.) that the expanding Roman power in Anatolia first impinged upon Parthia, and Parthian history comes clearly into the purview of the Roman historians. The Roman general Lucullus had defeated Mithradates of Pontus and occupied his kingdom, driving Mithradates to take refuge with his son-in-law, Tigranes the Great of Armenia. Lucullus therefore advanced across the highlands of Anatolia, crossing both the Euphrates and the Tigris, and laid siege to Tigranes' new capital, Tigranocerta, in 69 B.C.⁴ There is a conflict among the Greek and Roman historians as to the location of Tigranocerta, traditionally represented as the point of contact between the Armenian kingdom,

¹ Sellwood, "Parthian coins", p. 82.

² Phlegon of Tralles, fr. 12. 7 (= Jacoby FGrHist II B, 1164); Appian *Mith.* 104; Dio Cassius xxxvi, 4. Cf. Wroth, *BMC Parthia* xxxiv; Debevoise, p. 70.

³ "The coinage of the Parthians", in *SPA* I, 481; Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 396.

⁴ Pauly, s.v. Tigranocerta; M. Lehman-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, I, 383–6; 395–406.

and the later Parthian frontier-station at Nisibis. On the one hand, Plutarch and also Pliny¹ appear to describe Tigranocerta as situated north of the Tigris and east of Diyārbakr, a location which seems also to be supported by the *Peutinger Table*. On the evidence of those writers substantial authorities place the city at the medieval site of Miyāfārqīn, the modern Silvan. On the other hand, in the context of the later wars of Corbulo, Tacitus (who explicitly links the city with the River Nicephorius) gives the distance from Tigranocerta to Nisibis as exactly thirty-seven miles,² which suggests a site in the vicinity of Mārdīn, and an identification of the Nicephorius with the Zergan, a tributary of the Khabur (and ultimately the Euphrates) which passes nearby.³ If the latter location should prove correct, and the site so near to the Parthian border, a close interest of the Parthian government in events at Tigranocerta is easy to understand.

During the march of Lucullus to Tigranocerta, his opponents Mithradates and Tigranes had written to Phraates III seeking assistance. After his victory, Lucullus had entered into correspondence with the Parthian king to dissuade him from intervening. The Parthian replied amicably to both parties, but remained neutral. Lucullus even contemplated himself launching an expedition against Parthia, but the disaffection of his troops, exhausted after their long campaigns, led him to abandon the scheme. When in 66 B.C. Pompey was sent to supersede Lucullus in command of the Roman armies, he reversed a number of his predecessor's decisions, but secured an agreement with Phraates to maintain Parthian neutrality as before. Soon afterwards Tigranes the Younger rebelled against his father, and sought refuge with Phraates, whom he persuaded to invade the territory still held by his father around his capital of Artaxata, the modern Artashat on the Araxes River near Erevan, a place of course far to the north of the Roman military operations in Lesser Armenia. Phraates laid siege to Artaxata, but when he left the younger Tigranes to conduct operations, the father made a sortie and defeated his son, who fled to Pompey,

¹ Plutarch, *Lucullus* 24; Pliny, *Natural History* vi. 9. 26, places the site "*in excelso*" "on a height", and describes its river, the Nicephorius, as a tributary of the Tigris (vi. 31. 129).

² *Annals* xv. 5. 2: apud oppidum Nisibin, septem et triginta milibus passuum a Tigranocerta distantem . . .

³ As argued by E. Sachau, "Über die Lage von Tigranokerta", *APAW* 1880. 2 (1881); cf. L. Dilleman, *Haute Mésopotamie orientale* (Paris, 1962), pp. 252-67. The fullest discussion of the problem of Tigranocerta is no doubt that of Bernard W. Henderson, "Controversies in Armenian topography: 1, The site of Tigranocerta", *American Journal of Philology* xxviii (Baltimore, 1903), 99-121. He places Tigranocerta at Tel Armen near Mārdīn, apparently also the site of the Islamic city of Dunaisir.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE PARTHIANS

and offered his services as a guide for the Roman army that was already advancing on Artaxata. However, when Pompey arrived, the elder Tigranes submitted and was restored to his throne, while the son, who refused to acquiesce in a partition of the Armenian kingdom, was put in chains for eventual exhibition at the Roman's triumph. After thus settling matters, Pompey advanced into the Caucasus in pursuit of Mithradates of Pontus. None the less, Phraates sent to demand the return of his young protégé, who was his son-in-law; and proposed that the Euphrates be fixed as the boundary between Parthia and Rome. When Pompey retorted that the young Tigranes was closer kin to his father than to his father-in-law (and so would remain), and that the boundary would be fixed where justice directed, Phraates established his base at Arbela and, taking advantage of Pompey's absence in the north, overran the district of Gordyene on the Tigris below Diyārbakr. He was ultimately dislodged by the legate Afranius, but whether by force or negotiation is left uncertain.¹

After this settlement, Pompey returned across Asia Minor to Syria. But apart from a frontier dispute between Phraates and Tigranes the Great, in which the adjudication of the Romans was requested, the situation in Armenia remained quiet. It is necessary, however, to consider at this point a further numismatic problem which has a bearing on historical events during the reign of Phraates III. There are two groups of coins belonging to this general period which are often attributed to an "Unknown King".² The first of these groups, consisting of drachms, is unusual because it portrays on the obverse a diademed royal bust shown full face, and the critical words of the legend are once more ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ, as in the case of the presumed Gotarzes. The second of the groups shows the diademed head in profile, and the key words of the legend are now ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ. It is tempting, in view of the similarities, to ascribe these groups to Gotarzes, and this case has indeed been argued.³ It seems, however, to be invalidated by the fact that while the drachmae ascribed to Gotarzes bear no monograms, those under discussion here bear monograms similar to others which occur regularly on the Parthian

¹ As noted by Debevoise, p. 75, it is asserted by Dio Cassius xxxvii, 5, that Afranius reoccupied the district without fighting; on the other hand, Plutarch, *Pompey* 36, claims that Afranius drove out the Parthian king, and pursued him to Arbela.

² In particular by Wroth, *BMC Parthia*, p. 56.

³ A. Simonetta, "Notes on the Parthian etc. issues of the first century B.C.", *Congrès Internationale de numismatique*, Paris, 1953, II (1957), 116-19.

drachma coinage from Phraates III onwards. From this fact it can reasonably be deduced that the ruler of the frontal portrait is in any case no earlier than an immediate predecessor of Phraates III, and that he could be later.¹ Sellwood, however, has recently deduced from the development of the monograms on these and subsequent issues that the ruler of these coins should have been a contemporary of Phraates III.² Consequently he is led to reassert Wroth's attribution to an "Unknown King" active before 58 B.C., and suggests that this could only be an obscure personage, Darius of Media, mentioned by Appian in connection with the campaign of Pompey against Mithradates of Pontus.³ On this hypothesis it has therefore to be accepted that Darius of Media attained sufficient importance to issue a copious coinage, and apparently to contest the throne with so well-established a ruler as Phraates III. An alternative view, argued by Le Rider on the evidence of bronze issues from Susa⁴ would ascribe to Orodes II, one of the successors of Phraates III, the issues with Philopator; and, while reserving judgment about the issue with frontal portrait and the legend Theopator, inclines to see this also as an issue either of Orodes II or of his brother and rival Mithradates III.

THE CAMPAIGN³ OF CARRHAE

Whether or not, therefore, the existence of an "Unknown King", perhaps identical with Darius of Media, be admitted as the contemporary and rival of Phraates III, it is to the end of the latter's reign that we have now to turn. According to the explicit statement of the Greek historian Dio Cassius,⁵ "Phraates was assassinated by his sons; Orodes succeeded to the kingdom and expelled Mithradates his brother from the province of Media which he governed. The latter fled to Gabinius, and tried to persuade him to assist in effecting his return." The date of this episode is placed in the year 58/7 B.C. If the expulsion of Mithradates followed quickly on the death of the old king as this passage suggests, it is hardly possible that Mithradates III could have been responsible for the copious coinage with the facing bust, and

¹ Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 393. He may press the evidence too far, on p. 402, by asserting that the monograms necessitate the placing of these coins *after* those of Phraates III, since, as Sellwood has shown, they could equally well be contemporary.

² Sellwood, "Wroth's unknown Parthian king", *NC* 1965, p. 126. [See also ch. 8(a), pp. 287ff., below.]

³ Appian, *Mithradatic Wars* XII, 106, quoted by Sellwood.

⁴ Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 402.

⁵ xxxix. 56. 2.

bearing the monograms which are currently attributed to the Median mints of Ecbatana (Hamadān) and Rhagae (Ray).¹ To this extent, Sellwood's hypothesis of an earlier pretender active in the same general area seems to find justification, and may even give rise to a suspicion that it was on this pretender rather than on his own sons, whose coins of the drachma denomination bear the dutiful epithets Eupator ("Son of a noble father") and Philopator ("Lover of his father") respectively, that the death of Phraates should be blamed. Be that as it may, Gabinius, Roman proconsul of Syria since the beginning of the year 57 B.C., at first gave his assistance to the exiled Mithradates, and led a force across the Euphrates in his support. However, another request for help from the exiled Egyptian king Ptolemy XI Auletes diverted the attention of the Roman general, and Mithradates was left to essay the reconquest of the kingdom with whatever forces he could collect. Nothing daunted, in 55 B.C. the exiled prince did succeed in gaining control of Babylonia, and occupying and fortifying the city of Seleucia. He was able to strike a coinage of the tetradrachm denomination (peculiar as we have seen to the mint of Seleucia) and, exceptionally, inscribed with his personal name.² But the city was besieged and ultimately taken, towards the end of the year 54 B.C., by Surenas, the general of Orodes II, and the coins of Mithradates were overstruck before he had managed to put them into circulation. When the rebel prince surrendered to his brother, he was executed upon the spot.³

It is in the light of this dynastic struggle, uncertain though some of its details may be, that what is without doubt the most celebrated episode of Parthian history, the destruction of the Roman army under Crassus at the battle of Carrhae in 53 B.C., has therefore to be viewed. The interval between the capture of Seleucia by Surenas and the battle itself is now estimated at little more than a matter of weeks.⁴ Plutarch's account of the motives of Crassus' expedition, coloured as it was bound to be by the advantages of hindsight, acquires a more intelligible context when its synchronism with events in Parthia is clearly seen. Crassus had left Rome to assume his command in Syria in November 55 B.C., and at that time the attempt of Mithradates III upon Babylonia was meeting with some success. The projected Roman expedition was

¹ Sellwood, "Wroth's unknown Parthian king", p. 126.

² H. Dressel, "Ein Tetradrachmon des Arsakiden Mithradates III", *ZN* xxxiii (1922), 156-77 and pl. vi; cf. Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 399.

³ Justin XLII. 4, 1: . . . in conspectu suo trucidari iussit.

⁴ Le Rider, *Suse*, p. 404.

not to be an unsupported incursion into unknown and hostile territory or, as Parthians and later even Romans were to represent it, as a wanton aggression against an inoffensive ally. It would rather have been seen by Crassus and his party as a judicious move in support of a legitimate candidate for the throne; its aim, to relieve the gallant Mithradates, besieged in Seleucia, and to assist a Roman sympathizer on to the Parthian throne. Thus at this stage the Roman enterprise was by no means so rash as later developments were to make it appear. The historical narratives understandably put Crassus in the least favourable light. His preoccupation with financial considerations, acquisitiveness and ambition were no doubt notorious, and of course he was lacking in first-class military experience, particularly of the novel cavalry weapons of the Parthians, and the conditions of steppe warfare. On the other hand, as a prince of Roman industry and finance, he was by no means devoid of ruthlessness and astuteness. His previous career showed his capacity for handling a dangerous enterprise. As long as Mithradates continued to hold out at Seleucia, there might have been no question of a pitched battle. The Roman expedition might have required nothing more than a show of force.

In such circumstances, Plutarch is likely to have been right to blame Crassus for his dilatoriness in spending the late summer of 54 B.C. in occupying and garrisoning the cities of Mesopotamia, and thereafter returning to spend the winter in Syria. The historian stresses that he ought to have gone forward, and strengthened himself with the accession of Babylon and Seleucia, "cities constantly at enmity with the Parthians" – an observation that manifestly implies that Mithradates was still keeping up the fight.¹ Again, when the emissaries of Orodes reproached him for his aggression, the retort of Crassus that he would give his reply in Seleucia could well have reflected his expectation that he would find a favourable situation there. The sources quote the reply of the eldest Parthian ambassador, who held out his palm and said, "Hair will grow here before you see Seleucia."

In contrast with the doomed and pitiful figure of Crassus, the sketch which survives of the Parthian general Surenas is a vivid and spirited one. The name under which he appears in the classical sources was apparently no more than his hereditary title, that of *sūrēn*, which continues to appear in the record of Iranian history far into Sasanian

¹ Plutarch, *Crassus* XVI. 8: ὅτι πρόσω χωρεῖν δέον ἔχασθαι τε Βαβυλῶνος καὶ Σελευκείας, δυσμενῶν αἰὲ Πάρθοις πολέων...

times. By one of those tantalizing gaps in the historical record, his *personal* name is still unknown to us. In all likelihood it is preserved amongst the throng of epic heroes whose deeds are recalled in the Kayānian section of the *Shāh-nāma*. For though, in the national epic, the record of the Arsacids was suppressed at their true chronological point, the instance of Gotarzes has shown that some at least of its spectacular episodes were transferred to the legendary period of Kai Kāvūs, and incorporated there. The feat of arms performed by Surenas was certainly the most celebrated of the whole Arsacid era, and could not easily have vanished entirely. Thus in some ways the position of Surenas in the historical tradition is curiously parallel to that of Rustam in the epic. The latter was always represented as the mightiest of Iranian paladins, and the atmosphere of the episodes in which he features is strongly reminiscent of the Arsacid period. Yet despite the predominance of Rustam in the epic tradition, it has never been possible to find him a convincingly historical niche. Herzfeld, it is true, has developed the very valid theme of Rustam's eastern Iranian and Saka associations, and drawn a comparison with Gondophares, the later Indo-Parthian conqueror of Taxila.¹ Yet the very fragmentary record does not suggest that the careers of Rustam and of Gondophares were closely parallel, even though both were possibly members of the house of Suren.

Despite possible discrepancies between what is known of their careers, it is likely that the Surenas of Carrhae provides a closer historical analogy with the legend of Rustam. The possibility of an identification can only be tested when progress of archaeological research on Arsacid sites provides direct evidence from Iranian sources on this greatest of Arsacid triumphs, so far known only from the Greek and Roman tradition; and eventually reveals the personal name of Plutarch's Surenas. As to his prowess, the narrative speaks for itself:²

For Surenas was no ordinary person; but in fortune, family and honour the first after the king; and in point of courage and capacity, as well as size and beauty, superior to the Parthians of his time. If he went only on an excursion into the country, he had a thousand camels to carry his baggage, and two hundred carriages for his concubines. He was attended by a thousand heavy-armed horse, and many more of the light-armed rode before him. Indeed his vassals and slaves made up a body of cavalry little less than

¹ Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* (London, 1935), p. 66: "On the one hand therefore, he is the historical prototype of Rustam, hero of the *Shāh-nāma*; on the other hand, that of the leader of the Three Magi: Kaspar."

² Plutarch, *Crassus* 21.6.

ten thousand. He had the hereditary privilege in his family of putting the diadem upon the king's head, when he was crowned. When Orodes was driven from the throne, he restored him; and it was he who conquered for him the great city of Seleucia, being the first to scale the wall, and beating off the enemy with his own hand. Though he was not then thirty years old, his discernment was strong, and his counsel esteemed the best.

Such then were the protagonists in the decisive battle that was about to develop. With regard to the strength of the two armies, that of the Romans was greatly superior in sheer numbers, but ill adapted to the open terrain. According to the most reliable account, that of Plutarch,¹ Crassus commanded a force of seven legions, of which the total effective strength was estimated by Tarn at twenty-eight thousand heavy infantrymen.² Other commentators have given somewhat higher estimates. In addition, the Roman force included four thousand cavalry, a quarter of whom were Gaulish troops lent by Julius Caesar; and a similar number of light-armed infantry. At the minimum estimate, the army of Crassus would thus have numbered thirty-six thousand men.³ The Parthian force by which they were opposed consisted, as the account shows, of a thousand fully armoured lancers, the cataphracti, who formed the bodyguard of the Suren. Nine thousand horse-archers formed the main body, and the baggage-train of a thousand camels was available to bring up extra stocks of arrows. The entire force was mounted, and highly mobile under desert conditions. At a superficial reckoning, the Roman force may have seemed sufficient for the task in hand. The event showed, however, that in two critical respects the Romans had underestimated the Parthian horse-archers. The power of their arrows to penetrate the legionary armour had not been appreciated, perhaps because the Roman commanders were unaware that the compound bow which the Parthians employed⁴ was a more powerful weapon than the lighter bows found at that time in Europe. Again, the Romans had anticipated that the Parthian cavalry would quickly exhaust their stock of arrows; but the camel train of the Suren made it possible for him to bring up stocks of arrows as the quivers of his men were emptied. But for these two miscalculations, the Roman legionary square might have been expected to hold its own against the Parthian cavalry. Yet the heat, and vast distances of the Mesopo-

¹ *Crassus* 20.

² *CAH* IX, p. 608.

³ Debevoise, p. 83, gives the slightly higher estimate of 42,000.

⁴ F. E. Brown, "A recently discovered compound bow", *Seminarium Kondakovianum* IX (1937), 1-10.

tamian plain (for the battle took place in June) would have put even the stoutest infantry at a disadvantage. Moreover, the Roman means of retaliation against their adversaries were ineffective, since the range of the Roman javelin was obviously limited, and the Gaulish cavalry relied on for a counter-attack were provided only with short javelins, and were lacking in defensive armour.

Before his march began, Crassus had been advised by Artavasdes, king of Armenia, a Roman ally, to lead his forces through the mountains of that country, for the sake of shelter from the Parthian cavalry. However, he declined this advice, being anxious to incorporate the substantial Roman garrison posted during the previous season in the towns of Mesopotamia. And again, after crossing the Euphrates at Zeugma, he rejected the plan of his legate Cassius, that he should follow the course of the river to Babylonia. Instead Crassus followed the guidance of an Arab chief, whose name is given by Plutarch improbably as Ariamnes, but whom other sources name as Acbar or Abgar, and whom commentators have identified as the king of the city of Edessa. This guide, suspected by the historians of collusion with the Suren, led the Romans away from the river into the desert, to the direct proximity of the main Parthian force, and, when the battle was imminent, made a pretext to ride away.

At first the Romans prepared to advance to the encounter in extended line. Then Crassus formed the legions into a square, and so advanced to ford the River Balissus (Balikh). Contrary to the opinion of his officers, he decided not to camp by the water, but hurried the troops across, and before long came in sight of the advance-guard of the Parthians. The strength of their main body was at first concealed. Then the thunder of drums burst on the ears of the Romans. The mailed cavalry of the Suren's bodyguard uncovered their armour, and the sun glittered on their helmets of "Margian" steel – an expression which no doubt testifies that the cataphracts were Saka tribesmen recruited on the eastern frontier of the Parthian kingdom. The first attack was a charge by the lancers of the bodyguard, led in person by the towering figure of the Suren. Then, seeing the steadiness of the Roman legionaries, whose main advantage lay in hand-to-hand fighting, the cataphracts drew back, and the horse-archers began their work. What followed was more like a massacre than a battle. As often, the Romans had tried to remedy their weakness in cavalry by using light infantry mixed with their Gaulish horsemen. But such makeshift

tactics were of little avail against the finest cavalry in Asia. The legionaries were soon hard pressed and all but surrounded, so that Crassus was reduced to ordering his son, Publius, who commanded one of the wings, to attempt a charge with his force, and so perhaps create a diversion.

The force which the young Crassus led into the attack consisted of thirteen hundred horse, five hundred archers, and eight cohorts of the infantry, the latter totalling some four thousand men. At first the Parthians retired in front of them; but when they were separated from the main force they were quickly surrounded, offering an all but helpless mark to the rain of arrows. The threat of a charge by the cataphracts forced the Romans into close order, and thereby reduced their chances of escape. Though the Gauls caught hold of the Parthian lances to pull down the riders, and ran under the horses of their enemies to stab them in the belly, these were no more than tactics of desperation. Soon the young Crassus was disabled, and the remnant of his force retired to a mound to make their last stand. The young commander ordered his armour-bearer to end his life, and only five hundred of his soldiers survived to be taken prisoner.

This agonizing diversion had temporarily relieved pressure on the main Roman force. But the magnitude of their disaster became clear when the Parthians rode back with the head of Publius Crassus on a spear. Thereafter the main body had to defend themselves as best they could for the rest of the day under the constant hail of missiles. Only when it grew too dark to shoot did the Parthians draw off, leaving the Romans to pass a melancholy night, encumbered as they were with wounded, and anticipating their final destruction on the following morning. By this time the elder Crassus was prostrated with despair. But Octavius and Cassius, his lieutenants, resolved that their only hope was to escape under cover of darkness, and seek shelter behind the walls of the city of Carrhae. Thus they slipped away silently from their camp in the darkness; but those of the wounded who could be moved obstructed their march, and the majority, who had to be abandoned, raised the alarm with their cries. Understandably, retreating in the dark, the Roman column fell into disorder. But a party of cavalry reached the city at midnight, and warned Coponius, commander of the garrison there, merely that Crassus had fought a great battle with the Parthians, before turning west to make their escape across the Euphrates. Another detachment of two thousand under the Roman

officer Varguntius lost their way in the dark, and were found by the Parthians in the morning established on a hill. Of these, only twenty made their escape. But at Carrhae, Coponius suspected a mishap, and called his men to arms. Then he marched out, and conducted Crassus and the main body into the city.

There were no supplies in Carrhae for standing a long siege, nor hope of relief from the outside, since Crassus had concentrated for his army all the forces in the Roman East. The Roman commander therefore determined to break out on the second night, and make his way to safety in the shelter of the Armenian hills. Once again, his guide, Andromachus, was a Parthian sympathizer, who indeed was later rewarded after the expulsion of the Romans with the governorship of the city. It is said that he misled the Roman column in the dark, so that by dawn the main body was over a mile from the shelter of the hills. The quaestor Cassius, with five hundred horsemen, suspecting a subterfuge, turned back to Carrhae and later escaped by a different route to Syria. Octavius, another of the Roman officers, had reliable guides and gained the shelter of the mountains. At daybreak, Crassus and his force had occupied a spur connected by a low ridge to the main mountain range. When they came under attack, Octavius and his men moved down from the heights to their support. At this moment the Suren rode forward to offer a parley over terms of peace. It is not clear whether Crassus accepted voluntarily, or under pressure from his men. But he and Octavius, with a small group, went down to meet the Parthians, who mounted Crassus upon a horse, to take him away for the signing of the treaty. Octavius, suspecting foul play, seized the bridle of the horse, and, when a scuffle broke out, drew his sword. In the *mêlée* that followed, all the Romans in the party were slain; and their leaderless troops either surrendered or scattered, though very few were successful in making good their escape. Of the entire force, twenty thousand are said to have been killed; ten thousand were captured, and deported to distant Margiana. Thus ended the disastrous Roman campaign of Carrhae.

The upshot of the *débâcle* was to win unquestioned recognition for Parthia as a world power equal, if not superior, to Rome. The Euphrates was firmly established as the boundary between the two. At the same time, while the army of the Suren had been sent forward to oppose the Romans in Mesopotamia, the main Parthian force, including the bulk of their infantry, had been led by the king Orodes into Armenia, to

lever the Armenian king Artavasdes away from the Roman alliance. In this enterprise, Orodes was successful. He was able to bring the Armenian monarch to terms, and an alliance was sealed by the arrangement of a marriage between his son Pacorus and the sister of that king. Thus was confirmed the long and close connection between the Arsacid dynasty and the kingdom of Armenia, which remained the last stronghold of the Arsacids even after the rise of the Sasanians in Iran. While the two courts, all connoisseurs of Greek literature, were diverting themselves by watching a performance of the *Bacchae* of Euripides, the commander Silaces brought in the news of the victory, and laid the head of Crassus at Orodes' feet. The gruesome trophy was taken up by the producer of the play, who took it on to the stage and exhibited it to the company in place of the head of Pentheus, which is carried by the heroine in the tragedy.

The Roman east was now devoid of troops, and the way open for Parthian raiding parties to penetrate into Syria. At the same time, Parthian influence began to grow among the Jews of Judaea, who had long maintained links with their co-religionists in Babylonia under Parthian rule; and who now saw in the rising power of Parthia a possible counterpoise to Roman domination. An anti-Roman party took shape under Aristobulus, but their attempt to revolt was soon suppressed by the Roman governor Cassius, who marched hastily down from Syria. In the following year, 51 B.C., a more substantial Parthian force under the young prince Pacorus, supported by the veteran general Osaces, made their way across the Euphrates, and began to raid the suburbs and villas of Antioch. They were caught by Cassius in an ambush near Antigonea, in which Osaces was mortally wounded. After this the Parthians withdrew into northern Syria, and attempted no invasion of Roman territory in the following summer. In the Roman civil war which followed between Pompey and Caesar, the Parthians made no move, but maintained relations with the former. After his defeat and death, a force under Pacorus came to the aid of the Pompeian general Q. Caecilius Bassus, who was besieged at Apamea in the Orontes valley by the Caesarian forces. They were successful in raising the siege, but did not remain.

Caesar made elaborate plans after his supremacy was established for a campaign against Parthia. Troops were drafted to the East, and the route chosen for the expedition was by way of Lesser Armenia. However, Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C. averted the war, and the outbreak

of the Roman civil war found Parthian cavalry on the side of the republicans in their defeat at the battle of Philippi (42 B.C.).

Quintus Labienus, an officer of Brutus and Cassius, had been sent to Parthia for reinforcements, to aid the republican cause. When after the defeat he learned that republican supporters had been condemned under the proscriptions, he joined the Parthians; and in 40 B.C. a Parthian army, under the command of the Parthian prince Pacorus and of Labienus, invaded Syria. Apamea was quickly taken, and there the invading force divided. Labienus turned north to penetrate far into Asia Minor. At the same time Pacorus, who had already gained a high reputation in the Near East both for his military talent and for justice and moderation, turned south along the coast through Syria, while his general Barzapharnes led another force further inland. All the cities of the coast, as far to the southward as Ptolemais (Acre), admitted the Parthians, with the single exception of Tyre. In Judaea the leader of the pro-Parthian party was Antigonus, nephew of the High Priest Hyrcanus. The latter was in turn under the control of two Roman supporters, the Idumaeans Phasael and Herod. Antigonus sent a large subsidy to the Parthian prince, in return for military help to gain control of the province. The combined Jewish and Parthian force defeated their opponents and advanced on Jerusalem. When Hyrcanus and Phasael were persuaded to go down and negotiate with Barzapharnes they were taken into custody. Herod, hearing of their arrest, fled to his impregnable stronghold of Masada near the Dead Sea. Thus Antigonus was installed as king of Judaea, while the two prisoners were carried away to Parthia. For a moment, the whole of the Roman East seemed to be either in Parthian hands, or on the point of capture. Yet though connections between the Jews of Judaea and the Parthian empire, more especially through the Jews of Babylonia, were long to remain an important political factor, the conclusion of the second Roman civil war was soon to bring about a revival of Roman strength in Asia.

Antony, at that time the most powerful of the Roman generals, had already sent Publius Ventidius into Anatolia to oppose Labienus. Soon Labienus was driven back into Syria, and though his Parthian allies came to his support, they were caught at a disadvantage in the hill country by Ventidius and heavily defeated. When Labienus tried to escape his men were ambushed and himself taken prisoner soon afterwards and put to death. At the Amanus Gates between Cilicia and

Syria, the Parthian officer Pharnapates, after a fierce fight, was defeated and slain with most of his men. Late in 39 B.C., the Parthian crown prince Pacorus withdrew from Syria, and Ventidius was occupied in trying to reduce the cities that still remained pro-Parthian, but though he approached Jerusalem, did not attack it.

In the following spring, 38 B.C., Pacorus reassembled his forces and once more invaded Syria. The legions of Ventidius were still in winter quarters in Cappadocia, but the Roman general circulated misleading rumours about his plans, and thus delayed the Parthian advance. Finally the two armies met near Gindarus, to the north-east of Antioch. The Roman camp was situated on high ground, but the Parthians, believing the Roman forces to be weak, attempted to rush the camp. They were repelled with heavy losses, and though the Greek and Roman historians differ as to the exact course of the battle, Pacorus with his bodyguard was trapped and killed, and the remaining Parthians were dispersed, and driven back across the Euphrates. Pacorus had been a prince of outstanding merit and reputation. As successor-designate to the Parthian throne, he had even been permitted to make sparse issues of coins bearing his youthful portrait.¹ His death was not only a bitter blow to his father Orodes; by throwing open once more the question of the Parthian succession, it introduced a new source of dissension into the affairs of the kingdom. Orodes selected next as his heir Phraates (IV), who assumed effective power in 39/8 B.C. Soon afterwards, the aged king died, according to the historian Dio Cassius² of grief at his favourite son's death, or of old age. Plutarch³ prefers a lurid tale ascribing to Phraates IV the murder of his father. The new king was, at any rate, obliged to secure his succession—by putting to death his brothers and driving into exile numbers of their supporters and other opponents of his rule. One of these, Monaeses, who had gained a military reputation during the recent war, took refuge with Antony in Syria, and encouraged him to undertake a campaign against Parthia. Meanwhile, Antony had reconquered Jerusalem, and executed the Parthian nominee Antigonus, so that Herod now ascended the throne of Judaea.

MARK ANTONY IN ĀZARBĀĪJĀN

The force with which the Roman triumvir planned the invasion of Parthia is variously estimated at between sixteen and thirteen legions, or more than double the ill-fated force of Crassus. If the larger figure be

¹ Wroth, *BMC Parthia*, p. 97.

² XLIX, 23.

³ *Crassus* 33.

accepted, the total numbers would have amounted to sixty thousand Roman legionaries, with ten thousand Iberian and Celtic cavalry, and thirty thousand Asiatic allies, an enormous force for this period. The Roman army marched up the Euphrates to Carana, plausibly identified with Karīn-katak, the modern Erzerum. Here Artavasdes, king of Armenia, joined the Romans with a force of six thousand armoured cavalry, and seven thousand foot. The most substantial description of the campaign is that in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, but the account of Dio Cassius¹ adds some colourful details, and several points in the brief versions of Velleius Paterculus² and Florus,³ deriving probably from the lost book cxxx of Livy, provide critical control of the narrative. The principal source for all these versions was probably the account of Quintus Dellius, a Roman officer who took part in the expedition, and whose descriptions of the terrain are also mentioned by Strabo.⁴

Antony, "leaving Armenia on his left" (that is to say, passing south of the region of its capital Artaxata, which lay north of the Araxes), struck into Atropatene. His route was in all probability that of the plain which leads from Khūy to Marand. Since the siege-train, containing the eighty-foot ram on which he depended to reduce the walled cities, could not keep pace, he left it to follow under the escort of Oppius Statianus with two legions. The main body pressed on rapidly towards the capital city of Atropatene, named Phraata or Praaspa,⁵ where the wives and children of Artavasdes, the local king, resided, and which was strongly fortified and garrisoned. Shortly we shall return to the geographical problems of the campaign, and the identification of its principal city.

Meanwhile, the main Parthian force appeared under the personal command of the king Phraates, and descending on the slowly moving siege-train, wiped out its escort and destroyed the engines. By the time Antony had come to the rescue with reinforcements, only the shocking sight of ten thousand corpses remained. This initial reverse gravely prejudiced the Roman plan. On the one hand their ally, the Armenian Artavasdes, withdrew in alarm from the campaign with his indispensable cavalry. On the other, the Romans were deprived of machinery to assail the walls of Phraata, since timber to replace the lost equipment was lacking in the area. Their only hope of carrying the city lay in the tedious expedient of throwing up mounds of earth against

¹ XLIX. 25-9.

² II. 82ff.

³ II. 20.

⁴ XI. 13, 3.

⁵ The first form seems preferable. See below, p. 764.

the walls. To restore the spirit of the legionaries, Antony led out the main force of ten infantry legions to offer battle to the Parthians. By a skilful manoeuvre, the Roman commander marched his infantry back across the Parthian front, where the horse-archers were drawn up in a crescent. The Parthians were impressed by the discipline and silence of the Roman troops as they passed at regular intervals, but imagined that their intention was to retire rather than to attack. Then the Gallic cavalry came on at full speed, and as soon as the attention of the Parthians had been diverted in their direction, the legionaries also charged, and engaged at close quarters. The Parthian cavalry were put to flight. The legionaries maintained the pursuit for a distance of five miles, and the Gallic cavalry kept it up for nearly fifteen. Yet, when the Romans came to count the Parthian losses, they found that no more than eighty Parthians had been slain and thirty captured, damage that was trivial by comparison with their own losses in the previous encounter. When, on the following day, they marched back to their position at Phraata,¹ the horse-archers regrouped to harry them, and it was with great difficulty that the retreat was finally accomplished.

As the siege dragged on, both sides became increasingly uneasy. Antony was apprehensive because of the shortage of supplies, and found that it was impossible to send out foraging parties without incurring heavy losses. The Parthian king, Phraates, was anxious lest with the onset of the Āzarbāijān winter, the feudal levies that made up the bulk of his force would return to warmer levels, and he would be left with inadequate strength to sustain the campaign. The Parthian troopers were instructed to parley with the Roman outposts, and inspire in them hopes of concluding a truce. Finally, Antony sent an official delegation to negotiate with the king. The Arsacid rejected their now conventional request for the return of the standards and prisoners captured at Carrhae, but let them understand that a Roman withdrawal would not be opposed. The emissaries were none the less dismayed at the king's haughty manner, and he is vividly described as receiving them seated on a golden throne, and twanging impatiently at his bowstring,² exactly as the Parthian king is depicted on the Arsacid coinage. Nevertheless, as a result of this interview, Antony decided that the safest course would be to withdraw.

At this point in the story, an eminent modern commentator gives prominence to the role of the Parthian general Monaeses.³ We have

¹ Plutarch, *Antony* xxxix.

² Dio Cassius XLIX. 27; *CAH* x, 72-3.

³ Tarn, in *CAH* x. 72-3.

seen that he fled, early in the reign of Phraates IV, to take refuge in Roman Syria, where Antony allotted to his upkeep the revenue of several towns. Shortly before the departure of the Roman army for Armenia, Phraates "sent to Monaeses a right hand"¹ in token of amnesty. The picturesque and traditional Iranian ceremony re-enacts one that had taken place several centuries earlier, when the Achaemenian king Artaxerxes II issued a guarantee of immunity to his general Datames.² Monaeses then returned, with the approval of Antony, to the Parthian court. Yet while the Roman general is represented at that time as supposing that Monaeses would not only lay before the king his earlier request for the return of the standards, but would actually assist in misleading him over the Roman plans, some commentators maintain that Monaeses had all along been acting in the Parthian interest, and reported to Phraates all the details of the Roman military preparations. The several narratives make it clear that Phraates was present in person during the subsequent campaign in Atropatene, which we have just described. Although he did not go into battle personally, it is difficult to doubt that he exercised the supreme command. What is known of his stern disposition surely suggests that his was the plan to wipe out the Roman force as that of Crassus had been destroyed at Carrhae. Monaeses, it is true, must also have held a command, but it is difficult to believe that his attitude to his former benefactor Antony was equally ruthless. Though there is no need to doubt that the sympathies of the former exile were with his own countrymen, he was rather the victim of circumstances than a conspirator on either side, and would probably have been content with the mere withdrawal of the Romans. Plutarch thus reports that it was his emissary Mithradates who warned the Romans of an impending ambush, and on a second occasion helped them to find a way of escape.

The figure who played at this point a prominent part in the story of the Roman escape was the guide described in Plutarch's text as a Mardian (Latin "Mardus"). The Mardians were in fact an Iranian mountain tribe occupying an area of the Alburz Range,³ and it is hard to understand how the Roman general could have entrusted the safety of his army to a Parthian subject, or what such a tribesman would

¹ Plutarch, *Antony* xxxvii. 2: τοῦ δὲ Πάρθων βασιλέως τῷ Μοναίση δεξίαν καταπέμψαντος . . . cf. S. M. Sherwin-White, "Hand-tokens and Achaemenid practice", *Iran* xvi (1978), p. 183.

² Nepos, *Datames* x. 1: ". . . fidemque de ea re more Persarum dextra dedisset. Hanc ut accepit a rege missam, copias parat . . ."

³ For the presence of Mardians in Āzarbāijān, see below, p. 766; cf. Tacitus, *Annals* xiv. 23.

have gained by assisting the enemy. The two Latin authors whose version of the events apparently derives from the lost book cxxx of Livy, and so may stand nearer to the original source than does the account of Plutarch, maintain that the providential well-wisher was a survivor from the defeat of Crassus, who came at night and in Parthian dress to the Roman lines, and by greeting the guards in Latin,¹ won their confidence. According to this account, the purpose of the guide was to escape himself, and return to his Italian home. This form of the story certainly seems more plausible, and gives special point to the guide's constant warnings to the Roman general that if he exposed his legions to the cavalry on level ground he would share the fate of Crassus – a direct reminiscence of the man's own experience. Editors have suggested that the true reading of the word in the text of Plutarch should be "Marsus", and the man a member of the central Italian tribe which would naturally have been represented in the army of Crassus. Thus the words which occur in the famous ode of Horace – ²

Consenuit socerorum in armis

sub rege Medo Marsus et Apulus

would show that this prisoner had taken a Median wife, and would constitute an allusion to this very man. Since Horace would have known the Latin narrative of the expedition by Delliis, this seems a very convincing explanation. It has, however, also been suggested that the true reading should be "Margus", a reference to the fact that Roman prisoners had been settled in the eastern province of Margiana.

Whatever his origin, this providentially acquired guide certainly played a great part in securing the escape of the Roman force. For he urged Antony to return by a different and mountainous route, along which the Parthian cavalry would be at a disadvantage. On the fifth day of the exhausting march, a Roman officer, Flavius Gallus, rashly led out a large detachment of light-armed troops to attack the Parthian cavalry. He became separated from the main body and was quickly surrounded. In the ensuing action to effect his rescue, no fewer than three thousand Roman soldiers were killed and five thousand wounded, while Flavius himself died of his wounds. After this reverse, the hard-pressed Romans observed greater caution, and continued their march in the regular formation of a square, and with slingers and javelin-men

¹ Florus II. 20. 4: "Unus ex clade Crassiana Parthico habitu castris adequitat et salute Latine data, cum fidem ipso sermone fecisset . . ." Cf. Velleius Paterculus II. 82: "Captiv. cuiusdam, sed Romani, consilio et fide servatus est, qui clade Crassiani exercitus captus . . . accessit nocte ad stationem Romanam."

² Horace, *Odes* III. v. 8–9.

guarding the flanks and rear. On one occasion when nearly overwhelmed by assaults of the horse-archers, the Romans were reduced to adopting their celebrated "tortoise" formation, in which the front ranks knelt, and those behind protected them by holding their shields above their heads. The Parthians, thinking that they had become exhausted, came to close quarters, but the Romans leapt up and counter-attacked, inflicting some casualties and putting the rest to flight. Thus the agonizing retreat continued towards the Armenian border. The Romans had to endure one terrible night without water, when discipline began to fail, and even the tableware of the general's kitchen was plundered. After crossing a river of brackish and undrinkable water, the march was kept up until daybreak, and soon afterwards a river of fresh water was reached, after which the Parthians abandoned their pursuit.

One of the most interesting questions raised by this narrative has been the explanation of its geography. As we have seen, all commentators are fairly well agreed that the Roman army entered Atropatene (Āzarbāijān) by way of the plain of Marand, and passed round the eastern shore of the Urmīya Lake. In a famous article written many years ago,¹ the celebrated scholar and soldier Sir Henry Rawlinson argued that the city besieged by the Romans lay at the archaeological site of Takht-i Sulaimān, which has in recent years become the site of an important series of excavations conducted by the German Archaeological Mission in Iran.² Another view of the problem was, however, presented by the late Professor Minorsky,³ who maintained that there was no room within the relatively restricted circuit of the walls at Takht-i Sulaimān for such a considerable town as the Phraata of Plutarch,⁴ and moreover that it would scarcely have been feasible for Antony's predominantly infantry force to push forward so deep into enemy territory as to reach the Takht.⁵ A further argument in favour of Minorsky's view, though not available to him at the time that his article was written, is that the subsequent campaigns of excavation at

¹ H. C. Rawlinson, "Memoir on the site of the Atropatenian Ecbatana", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* x (London, 1840), 65-158.

² R. Naumann *et al.*, "Takht-i Suleiman und Zendan-i Suleiman"; for details see bibliography to chapter 29(a), p. 1369.

³ Minorsky, "Roman and Byzantine campaigns in Atropatene", in *Iranica: Twenty Articles*, pp. 86-109.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 94, where it is contrasted with Ganzaca, but the same antithesis is implied with "the great city of Phraata" (as it is called by Plutarch, *Antony* xxviii), as noted on p. 102.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 106.

Takht-i Sulaimān have still not given clear confirmation of the existence there of any significant Parthian remains, and tend to support Minorsky's opinion that the fire-temple was established no earlier than the reign of the Sasanian Khusrau Anushīrvān (A.D. 531-79). Accordingly, Minorsky places the city besieged by Antony in the vicinity of modern Marāgha, and finds confirmation of this theory in the statement of the Arab historian al-Balādhurī that the pre-Muslim name of Marāgha was Afrāh-rōdh,¹ a name which he compares with the Phraata of Plutarch, and which suggests that the latter reading is superior to the name Praaspa given by Dio Cassius. Minorsky is in agreement with Rawlinson that in its retreat the Roman army must have moved eastwards out of Marāgha, and around the eastern side of Mount Sahand towards the plain of Tabrīz. The brackish river, on this hypothesis, is the river of Tabrīz, called Ajī Chai in its upper reaches, and in the neighbourhood of the city marked on maps as Talkharūd, the "Bitter River". In Rawlinson's own words it is "the salt stream of the Ajī, the only river of this nature, I believe, in the whole of Azerbājān".² From this crossing Rawlinson believed that the Romans continued to march along the plain of Tabrīz north-westwards towards Marand, and that the fresh river at which their sufferings ceased was the "Saliya or Savala Chay", corrected by Minorsky to Sāvalān Chai, some fifteen miles across the plain. Yet since according to the narrative of Plutarch, the route between the two rivers was rocky and precipitous, and the whole purpose of the Roman general was to avoid the plain, one may suggest that the route could rather have been over the Gaija Bel pass between Tabrīz and Ahar, and that the Romans could have finally escaped pursuit on crossing the Ahar Chai. From this point, their six-day march to the Araxes would have presented little difficulty. Thus the expedition made its way back into Armenia, having lost, according to Plutarch, twenty thousand infantry and four thousand cavalry, besides a further eight thousand men in the long winter march through Armenia back to their quarters in Syria.

Despite the Parthian king's triumphant expulsion of the Roman invaders from his territory, his harsh disposition quickly gave rise to dissension among his own subjects. A dispute with the very ally in whose defence he led the Parthian armies into Atropatene, Artavasdes of Media, made the latter so apprehensive for his safety that he even sent emissaries to Antony to ask for an alliance.³ The proconsul was

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 104, 106.

² Rawlinson, "Memoir", p. 116.

³ Dio Cassius XLIX. 33; Plutarch, *Antony* LII.

delighted at the opportunity so afforded to pay off his grudge against the Armenian Artavasdes, to whose irresolution if not positive defection many were content to ascribe the Roman disaster in Atropatene. Thus strengthened, Antony once more mobilized an army, and in 34 B.C. again marched into Armenia, ostensibly to arrange a marriage with the daughter of Artavasdes for Alexander, his son by Cleopatra. When the hapless Armenian visited the Roman camp he was arrested and put in irons, perhaps on suspicion of contacts with Octavian. His son Artaxes was driven out of the country, to take refuge with Phraates, while Antony left a garrison in Armenia, and carried Artavasdes back with him to Egypt, where he was put to death. In 33 B.C. Antony was again in Armenia, contracting an alliance with the Median king against both Octavian and the Parthians. Soon afterwards Artaxes and the Parthians returned, but eventually other preoccupations obliged Antony to withdraw, and the whole region passed under Parthian control.

The death of Antony in Egypt after his defeat at Actium in 31 B.C. left Octavian, soon to be known as the emperor Augustus, undisputed master of the Roman world. He was in a strong position to achieve an amicable relationship with Phraates, since Antony had been their common enemy. To this factor may be added the new ruler's diplomatic skill, and the fortunate accident which gave him a bargaining counter. The Parthian king returned victorious to his capital, but by his haughtiness aroused the anger of the populace, and was driven into exile by a sudden rising. He visited more than one of the neighbouring states, but it was finally from certain Scythians that he obtained the reinforcements to reclaim his throne. During his enforced absence, a certain Tiridates, perhaps the general mentioned in a Greek poem from Susa,¹ seized power during 30/29 B.C. When the Scythians approached, Tiridates fled with his supporters to Augustus, taking with him as hostage the youngest of Phraates' sons, who had somehow been kidnapped from his guards.²

Justin's version³ narrates the abduction of the boy as an episode of Tiridates' first exile, but his statement that the refugee and his hostage came to Augustus in Spain connects the event with the second expulsion of Tiridates. Tarn⁴ connects the "Phraates son of Phraates" mentioned in the *Monumentum Ancyranum* of Augustus as a reference to this young

¹ F. Cumont, "Nouvelles inscriptions grecques de Suse", *CRAI* 1930, 211-20, quoted by Debevoise, p. 135 n 42.

² Dio Cassius LI. 18. 3 and LIII. 33. 1.

³ XLII. 5-6.

⁴ Tarn, "Tiridates II and the young Phraates", in *Mélanges Glotz* II, 834.

prince, but the reference might also allude to the subsequent exile of Phraataces (below, p. 68).

Envoys from Phraates soon arrived to demand the return of his son, and the surrender of the rebel. Augustus then diplomatically accepted the first demand, but refused either to return Tiridates, or on the other hand to support his pretensions to the Parthian throne. However, it seems that Tiridates soon found his way across the Parthian frontier for another attempt, and he struck tetradrachms again in Seleucia, bearing the exceptional epithet *Philorhomaïos* "Friend of the Romans" in May 26 B.C. It is apparently to the period of this episode that we should refer the cryptic notice in Isidore of Charax¹ concerning a treasury of Phraates on an island in the Euphrates below Dura, and of the Arsacid having put to death his concubines (not explicitly at the same spot, as some commentators assume), seemingly to avoid their capture by the pretender. Coins show none the less that Phraates was back in power during August 26 B.C., but Tiridates made a final appearance in March 25 B.C. before he finally disappears from the historical record.²

THE "ROMAN PEACE" AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Meanwhile, for Roman popular opinion, memory of the defeats under Antony and Crassus was the ruling obsession, and indeed was long to remain so, an attitude which prompted repeated Roman attempts to invade Parthia on later occasions. Augustus was fully aware of the political prestige to be gained from a favourable settlement, but his growing concentration of troops in Syria may have been intended chiefly for propaganda effect. Finally, however, in 20 B.C. after prolonged negotiations the desired result was achieved, an outstanding success for Augustus' characteristic policy of conciliation, and Phraates formally returned the lost Roman standards and the surviving Roman prisoners. The event was immediately commemorated on Roman coinage from Syria to Spain.³ From the viewpoint of Augustus this settlement, achieved wholly without bloodshed or indeed military operations, and almost without expense, gave enormous propaganda benefit, and could be represented as a redressing of the military balance so disastrously upset by the previous costly failures. From that of Phraates and the Parthians, the concessions made were a

¹ Isidore of Charax, *Parthian stations*, pp. 4-5.

² See below, Ch. 8(a), p. 292.

³ H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* I (London, 1923), 46; 63, nos. 46ff; 70, nos. 98ff; 84, no. 256; 86, nos. 302ff.

THE "ROMAN PEACE"

mere formality, a trifling return for the restoration of the kidnapped prince, and an inexpensive insurance premium against the possible damage of another Roman invasion. Thus both sides were easily able to escape from the shackles of their own military propaganda, and lay the foundations of a comparatively stable peace, the Pax Romana. The outcome was at once a tribute to the patience and judicious foresight characteristic of Augustus as a policy-maker,¹ to the favourable historical circumstances already noticed which for once made possible a degree of personal confidence between the monarchs of antagonistic powers, and indeed to the firm, and at times ruthless, determination of Phraates IV to uphold the integrity of his kingdom even in the face of the wealthiest and most effectively organized of the ancient world's military powers.

If indeed Phraates IV is rightly to be identified with the Arsaces of the second Avroman parchment, and its date 291 to be referred to the Seleucid era, in 21/20 B.C., notwithstanding the harem tragedy recorded by Isidore, four of the Arsacid's queens were living, Olenieire, Cleopatra, Baseirta and Bistheibanaps.² This fact did not deter Augustus from pursuing his Parthian policy by the gentler method of bestowing upon Phraates an Italian slave-girl of unusual accomplishments, known as Thea Musa.³ Whether the gesture was explicitly by way of compensation for the Arsacid's previous losses is a matter for conjecture, but Musa quickly became the favourite of the fierce old king, and before long gave birth to a son known as Phraataces (the diminutive form of the king's own name), or by other authorities designated as Phraates (V). The infant prince was soon regarded as a candidate for the succession, and Musa, who now as acknowledged queen achieved a position of great influence at the court, persuaded the king to send his older children to Rome, and thus leave the way clear for her son. As Phraates may well have perceived, the arrangement was advantageous also from another viewpoint. For if Phraataces with the help of his mother was to inherit the throne, his half-brothers would be safer if they resided outside his jurisdiction. Having therefore called to a conference Marcus Titius, the Roman governor of Syria, the king handed over to him his four sons, Seraspadanes, Rhodaspes, Phraates

¹ The episode was naturally mentioned by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, the record of his career, v. 29: Parthos trium exercitum Romanorum spolia et signa reddere mihi supplicesque amicitiam populi Romani petere coegi.

² E. H. Minns, "Parchments of the Parthian period from Avroman in Kurdistan", *JHS* xxxv (1915), 32; cf. Debevoise, p. 140.

³ Josephus xviii, 40, "Thesmusa", variant reading "Thermousa"; "Thea Musa" on coins.

and Vonones, together with the wives of the two last, and their four sons.¹ All these princes were maintained by Augustus at Rome in princely style, and in due course Vonones was to make a bid for the succession. They are mentioned in several Latin inscriptions,² and their presence is reported with pride by Augustus in the *Res Gestae*.³

In 2 B.C., when the aged Phraates IV was no doubt already ailing, Musa is reported to have had him taken off by poison, thus smoothing the succession of her son Phraataces. Subsequently Josephus reports that the mother became the consort of the son, an event which some authorities regard the coin of A.D. 2 (bearing the two portraits) as confirming. It is not clear whether this alliance, if such it was, should be regarded as an early instance of Zoroastrian kin-marriage; but the assumption is contradicted by the fact that the historian ascribed the subsequent Parthian rebellion against the new king partly to their *detestation* of such incest.⁴ The new king was driven from the throne in A.D. 4, and himself fled to Roman Syria, where he did not long survive.

This upheaval constituted the prelude to a long period of dynastic conflict in the Parthian kingdom. A prince called Orodes (III) was called to the throne; but his violent disposition, no exception in these troubled times, led to his being cut down by the nobles at a banquet, or, in another version, on a hunting party. Envoys were then sent to Rome to ask for the release of one of the hostages to occupy the throne, and Vonones was selected. However, the patronizing Roman propaganda on the theme *Rex Parthis datus* "a king assigned to the Parthians"⁵ seems to have aroused the anger of the Parthians, who once more rebelled, and set up against Vonones a certain Artabanus, who had formerly been king of Atropatene, and who now advanced towards Ctesiphon, the capital. Vonones opposed him near the entrance to the Zagros passes, and at their first encounter won a victory, which gave rise to the famous, but premature, coin-issue inscribed ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΝΩΝΗΣ ΝΙΚΗΣΑΣ ΑΡΤΑΒΑΝΟΝ "King Vonones victorious over Artabanus".⁶ However, in the second encounter Artabanus (III) gained the upper hand, and while his rival

¹ Strabo xvi. i. 28.

² V. E. Gardthausen, "Die Parther in griechisch-römischen Inschriften", *Orientalische Studien Theodor Nöldeke zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet* (Giessen, 1906), p. 844; *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1862-) vi, no. 1799; *ibid.* xiv, no. 2216. Cf. Debevoise, p. 144.

³ vi. 32.

⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities* xviii. 42-3.

⁵ For the origin of this phrase, see below, p. 91.

⁶ See below, Ch. 8(a), p. 293.

THE "ROMAN PEACE"

took shelter in Seleucia, advanced to be proclaimed as king at Ctesiphon in A.D. 12. Vonones then escaped to Armenia, where he manoeuvred to secure the throne, but in A.D. 15/16 the Romans decided that he was an unsafe nominee, both owing to the hostility of Artabanus, and because of his own irresolution; so the unhappy prince was obliged to take sanctuary with Creticus Silanus, governor of Syria, by whom he was granted shelter and royal honours.

In A.D. 14 the Roman emperor Augustus died, and was succeeded by his adopted son, Tiberius, who sent the young Germanicus to settle affairs in Armenia and on the Parthian frontier. To reduce the possibility of provocation to Artabanus, Vonones was removed to Pompeiopolis (Soli) in Cilicia. He escaped by bribing his guard, and tried to flee to Georgia, but was arrested on the river Pyramus (Ceyhan), and run through by his guilty custodian, who hoped thus to efface the evidence of his own complicity.

The death of Vonones was followed by that of Germanicus, and during the period A.D. 19–32 tranquillity prevailed on the Euphrates frontier. Artabanus remained firmly in control of the Parthian kingdom, and his famous rescript in Greek to the municipality of Susa, dated Arsacid Era 268/December A.D. 21, was to remain the last known inscription of its type.¹ To the same period belongs the narrative given by Josephus² of a signal disaster that befell the Jewish population in Babylonia. It provides an instructive commentary on the extent of local autonomy that prevailed in the Parthian kingdom at this time. The city of Nearda, because of its secure position in a bend of the Euphrates, was selected by the community of the Exile as the repository of their traditional offerings of two drachmae a head for the Temple at Jerusalem. It happened that two Jewish youths of that town, Asinaeus and Anilaeus, apprenticed to a weaver, being maltreated by their master took weapons and fled to the swamps at the "Parting of the Rivers".

At this point some words of commentary are needed on the geographical situation. The Greek words just quoted suggest a Greek translation of the Aramaic term *Pallugtha* "the Canal Regulator", a term which has given its name to the modern township of Fallūja in western Iraq, where the Euphrates divided at certain periods of antiquity; and also to the canal system known to classical authors as

¹ Welles, *Royal Correspondence of the Hellenistic Period*, pp. 299ff.

² *Antiquities* XVIII, 311.

Pallacottas, which here diverged westwards from the original river-course, and of which the bed is today followed by the main stream of the Euphrates. The town mentioned by Josephus as Nearda appears in the Babylonian Talmud as Nehardē'ā, repeatedly named as one of the main centres of the Jewish exile. The site has not been positively located on the ground, but there are fairly close indications of its general position. Ptolemy places Naarda immediately upstream of Sippar.¹ In the Babylonian Talmud it appears as one of the last settlements of Babylonia on the road to Syria, and was enclosed not only by the Euphrates but also by a reach of the celebrated Royal Canal.² That channel, in Aramaic Nehar Malkā, carried water eastwards from the Euphrates to irrigate areas round Seleucia and discharge into the Tigris. A problem is that owing to realignments of the canals, the divergence of the Royal Canal varied at different periods. According to Isidore of Charax, the Royal Canal diverged at a point below Besēchana, but the distance given in his text is evidently excessive, and is usually corrected by his commentators to 12 *schoenae* or parasangs.³ The location of Besēchana itself is anyway fixed, since the town is identical with that known later to the Sasanians as Pērōz-Shāpūr,⁴ and to the Arabs as al-Anbār, of which the extensive ruins have been reported a mile or so north of Fallūja. The geographer of the 'Abbāsīd period, Ibn Serapion, places the divergence of the Royal Canal at a point somewhat less than eight parasangs, or twenty-four miles, downstream of Pērōz-Shāpūr,⁵ and this indication would give a suitable position for Nehardē'ā. On the other hand, two writers of the intervening period, Pliny and Ammianus Marcellinus, regarded the channel which diverged from the Euphrates *above* Pērōz-Shāpūr – that known in Islamic times as the Nahr 'Īsā, or at the present day as the Saqlāwiya Canal – as the authentic start of the Royal Canal. On their interpretation Nehardē'ā would have to be sought at, or near, the site of al-Anbār; and this was the theory adopted by the medieval traveller Benjamin of Tudela, who refers to "El-anbar, which is Pumbedithā in Nehardea".⁶

¹ Ptolemy, *Geographia* v. 17. 5.

² Cf. *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, ix, 208, quoting Qid. 70b, and Shab. 108b.

³ *Parthian Stations*, p. 4; cf. L. Dillemann, "Ammien Marcellin et les pays de l'Euphrate et du Tigre", *Syria* xxxviii (1961), 156.

⁴ Henning, "Βεσήχανα πόλις: ad BSOAS xiv, 512, n. 6", *BSOAS* xv (1953), 392; Honigmann and Maricq, *Recherches sur les "Res gestae divi Saporis"*, p. 116.

⁵ Quoted by G. Le Strange, "Description of Mesopotamia and Bagdad", *JRAS* 1895, pp. 15, 70; Honigmann and Maricq, p. 117.

⁶ Quoted by R. D. Barnett, "Xenophon and the wall of Media", *JHS* lxxxiii (1963), p. 14 n. 66; Naarda is also placed at Pērōz-Shāpūr by Dillemann, "Ammien Marcellin".

THE "ROMAN PEACE"

We are not concerned here with this localization of Pumbeditha, another important Jewish settlement during the Parthian period.¹ It seems clear, however, that Nehardē'ā lay either close to Fallūja, or some twenty-four miles downstream, and that the swamps to which Josephus refers lay yet further to the south, along the line of the Pallacottas channel, which is now the course of the main stream of the Euphrates.²

We return now to the two apprentices of Nehardē'ā, who quickly gathered a following of youths as impoverished as themselves, and began to earn a substantial living through brigandage. The satrap of Babylonia led against them a force of cavalry, intending to surprise them on the Sabbath. The outlaws, however, were forewarned by the neighing of the horses, and putting aside their religious scruples, defended themselves resolutely, and defeated the Parthians with great slaughter. At this point the king Artabanus intervened personally, and summoned the brothers to court under safe conduct. When first Anilaeus, and then Asinaeus, had been prevailed on to attend, he conferred on them the governorship of their territory – though much to the chagrin of his Parthian commander-in-chief Abdagases. That the king had political reasons for this unexpected decision is evident enough. In the province of Babylonia at this time not only were many Parthian nobles disaffected, but at the same time the "Syrians" and the Hellenists were at loggerheads, and moreover the city of Seleucia was on the brink of open rebellion against the Parthian government, which in fact broke out some years later in A.D. 35–6 as we shall see. At the same time, the pretender Tiridates, with Roman support, was planning an attempt upon the Parthian throne. In such a dangerous situation, it is easy to see that the king would have welcomed the establishment of a new military force, committed to neither of the leading factions, and attached, if only by his toleration, directly to the ruler himself.

For fifteen years, as Josephus relates, the brothers governed their province successfully and firmly. Only when Anilaeus was tempted by guilty passion did their position decline. A certain Parthian general in the area had a wife of surpassing beauty, whose fame spread far and

¹ The location of Pum-baditha at Pērōz-Shāpūr is rejected by Maricq, "Res gestae divi Saporis", in *Classica et Orientalia*, p. 97 (= *Syria* xxxv (1958), 355); long ago G. Le Strange, *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, p. 74, placed Pum-Baditha twenty-eight miles north of Kufa on the Hindiya Channel, at the divergence of the Badāt Canal.

² Herzfeld, *Persian Empire*, p. 230 n. 2, places Nehardē'ā at Tall al-Kanīsa, between al-Anbār and Sippar. Further notes on Tall al-Kanīsa will be found in Barnett's "Xenophon and the wall of Media", pp. 15–16.

wide. The former apprentice was determined to win her for himself, and this he could only achieve by making a sudden attack upon the husband, killing him in battle, and carrying off his widow. He quickly made her his wife, but the lady took advantage of this enhanced status to resume her ancestral worship of images, some of which she had contrived to bring away with her into her captivity. Such unorthodoxy aroused bitter complaints from the followers of the brothers, who protested to Asinaeus about this marriage to a gentile, so violently indeed that one of the party who spoke too freely was even put to death. Asinaeus in fact took no action against his brother, but the wife of Anilaeus, perceiving the danger that was to be anticipated from the discontent of their followers, put poison in the food of Asinaeus, so leaving her husband as the sole leader of the band.

Anilaeus next began to ravage the property of a leading Parthian, by name Mithradates, a member of the high nobility, and a son-in-law of Artabanus the king. The aggrieved nobleman naturally sallied out with his cavalry to chastise the raiders, but Anilaeus surprised them in a night attack on the Parthian camp, and not only dispersed the Parthians but captured Mithradates himself. For fear of reprisals against the Jewish community at Babylon, Anilaeus finally decided that Mithradates should be released. However, enraged by his humiliation, Mithradates returned to the attack with greatly enlarged forces, and on the second occasion heavily defeated the Jewish forces, whose losses were estimated by Josephus at tens of thousands. Though Anilaeus and his bodyguard made good their escape to the marshes, and built up their force by recruiting runaways and outlaws, the new recruits could not compare in efficiency with those who had fallen, and he was eventually surprised by the Babylonians and put to death.

The anecdote of the two brothers had a direct bearing on the subsequent revolt of Seleucia against the Parthian rulers. For now that military support was removed, the Babylonians began to harass the Jewish settlements in the Euphrates region. The inhabitants, lacking means of defence, decamped to the city of Seleucia and settled there. However, that city itself in A.D. 35-6 broke into open rebellion against the Parthian empire; and within three years a state of social tension became obvious even within the walls. Initially hostility had prevailed between the Greek community and the local Aramaeans. The Jews at first allied themselves with the latter party, which thus became the stronger; but later the Greeks contrived to reach an understanding

THE "ROMAN PEACE"

with the Aramaeans, and the two factions combined to make a surprise attack on the Jews. No fewer than fifty thousand of the latter are reported to have been massacred, and the survivors expelled from the city. Some fled to the adjoining royal residence of Ctesiphon, while others from the surrounding districts made good their escape to the cities of Nehardē'ā and Nisibis.¹ Despite its wealth of colourful detail there are several obscurities in the narrative; it is not clear what became of the Jewish refugees who retired to Ctesiphon, and why the fugitives who returned to Nehardē'ā felt themselves secure there, while previously they had preferred to evacuate that site to settle at Seleucia.

Having thus traced the fortunes of the populous Jewish community in the growing disorder that prevailed at this time in Parthian Babylonia, we must return to consider the history of the kings. In A.D. 35 the Roman emperor Tiberius, egged on by secret emissaries of the Parthian nobility, in particular a certain Sinnaces, undermined the Parthian position in Armenia by effecting a reconciliation between Pharasmanes, king of Iberia, and his brother Mithradates. The former was then induced to place his brother on the Armenian throne. The Arsacid incumbent, known only as Arsaces, was assassinated, and when Artabanus sent his son Orodes to restore the situation he was defeated by the numerous Iberian infantry force, supported by Sarmatian cavalry from beyond the Caucasus.

Artabanus brought up his entire army to repair the setback, but Vitellius, Roman governor of Syria, massed his troops against the frontier of Mesopotamia, thus creating a diversion. At the same time, the Romans played on the disloyalty of certain prominent Parthian nobles. Sinnaces, a leading malcontent, urged others to revolt, and soon even the determined Artabanus found he had no recourse but to withdraw to "Scythia", east of the Caspian Sea, and to retire to the life of a private citizen, until a change in his fortunes might enable him to return with the help of his Hyrcanian and Carmanian allies.²

When the throne was thus standing vacant, Vitellius seized the chance to ferry across the Euphrates the exiled Parthian prince Tiridates. Several Parthian nobles offered their services to the pretender, including Ornospadēs, himself a former exile, the treacherous Sinnaces, and a certain Abdagaeses who handed over the treasure and the regalia,

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* XVIII, 310-79.

² Tacitus, *Annals* VI, 31-7, now provides the main narrative; some additional details, mostly unfavourable to Rome, are given in Josephus XVIII, 97-100, who directly states that the plots of Vitellius were aimed at the life of the king.

and whose behaviour suggests he may have been identical with the resentful general of the episode of Anilaeus (above, p. 72). Yet the Parthian spirit would not long endure a Roman protectorate, and though Seleucia received the pretender, two important satraps, Phraates and Hiero, refused to attend the coronation; instead, they sent to Artabanus in Hyrcania. Still in the tattered costume of a hunter, and holding his bow, the veteran king put himself at the head of the anti-Roman party, and soon found himself in the vicinity of Seleucia at the head of a large army. Tiridates, dismayed, took the fatal decision to retire west of the Tigris into Mesopotamia. His retreat assumed the appearance of a rout, and he soon fled back across the Euphrates into Syria.

Tiberius now instructed his governor to come to terms with Artabanus. The two met, each accompanied by a bodyguard, on the bridge of the Euphrates, and were entertained to a banquet by Herod the tetrarch.¹ Dio Cassius, however, places this episode after the death of Tiberius and under Caligula,² a dating which the silence of Tacitus may be held to confirm. The terms of the treaty are not known in detail, but an essential Roman demand was that a son of the Parthian king should be sent to Rome as a surety for the maintenance of peace, and the hostage in this case was the prince Darius.³ When the treaty was agreed, Vitellius returned to Antioch, and Artabanus to Babylon. There is perhaps no need to follow Debevoise⁴ here in assuming that Josephus' use here of the word "Babylon" is actually a reference to Seleucia, capital city of Babylonia. For this metropolis was still in open revolt, and some of its factions secretly in touch with Rome, so as to make even the established Parthian royal residence at Ctesiphon an inconvenient centre for the ruler when the routes to the threatened Euphrates frontier, and the Tigris bridges, might so easily be blocked by a hostile force. In such circumstances, it is not difficult to accept that Artabanus had temporarily established his court at Babylon, just as did his successor Vardanes a few years later, according to the testimony of the biographer Philostratus.⁵

The Roman emperor Tiberius died in A.D. 37, but the plots he had set afoot against Artabanus III were by no means disarmed after his death. Learning that an assassination attempt was once more being

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* XVIII. 101; Suetonius, *Vitellius* 2. 4.

² LIX, 17. 5; Suetonius, *Vitellius* 2. 4.

³ Josephus, *Antiquities* XVIII. 101; Suetonius, *Caligula* 19.

⁴ P. 163.

⁵ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* II. 28.

THE "ROMAN PEACE"

planned, the Parthian king took refuge in the semi-independent frontier kingdom of Adiabene, then under the rule of a certain Izates, a member of the local dynasty who, not long before, during a visit to the commercial seaport of Spasinou Charax,¹ had become a convert to Judaism. In the cordial reception given by the local princeling to the exiled king, we see once more evidence for the close relations existing at this time between the Jewish community and the Arsacid rulers in their hour of crisis. Izates received his former overlord with honour, and undertook to effect his restoration to his kingdom. He wrote to the Parthian leaders urging them to restore the king, and even persuaded the Arsacid prince Cinnamus,² who had been nominated to the throne, to write offering to abdicate in favour of Artabanus; and ultimately himself once more to place the diadem on the head of the aged king. Izates was rewarded for his fidelity with such traditional honours as the right to wear his tiara upright after the fashion of the kings, and to sleep on a bed of gold;³ he was further endowed with the territory of Nisibis.

In A.D. 38, the long reign of Artabanus came to an end, and he bequeathed the kingdom to his son Vardanes.⁴ Another son, Gotarzes, is reported at first to have seized the throne,⁵ but when he put to death the third brother, Artabanus, with his wife and child, there was a general outcry, which resulted in an invitation being sent to Vardanes. The latter, possibly to some extent forewarned, surprised the usurper by covering the distance of three hundred miles in only two days, a feat which is not to be dismissed as impossible,⁶ and was acclaimed by the governors of the adjoining provinces. Only the Seleucians rejected the succession of Vardanes, who promptly laid siege to the city; but Gotarzes returned to the attack with reinforcements from the Hyrcanians and Dahae, and forced Vardanes to withdraw, on the evidence of Tacitus,⁷ to "the plains of Bactria". This detail is surprising, since it is difficult to see by what route Vardanes could have reached Bactria, if Hyrcania and the land of the Dahae were under the control of his rival.

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 34.

² McCown and Albright, *BASOR* LXVI (April 1937), 20.

³ Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 67.

⁴ *Ibid.* 69.

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* xi. 8.

⁶ "Biduo tria milia stadiorum invadit." It has lately been shown that the stade in Asia may conveniently be reckoned at 10 to the mile. G. G. Ramsay, *The Annals of Tacitus* II (London, 1909), 10, reckoned such speed of travel as impossible, but Debevoise, p. 167, n. 3 points out that Tiberius himself once travelled 184 miles in 24 hours, cf. Pliny, *Natural History* vii, 20, 84. The relays of the Persian courier service made great speeds possible.

⁷ *Annals* xi. 8.

Upheavals followed in Armenia, for Claudius had released the Iberian Mithradates, for some time held in detention at Rome, and he now began to reoccupy the country with Roman assistance. At the same time, a battle was pending between Vardanes and Gotarzes. However, when the latter revealed to the former a plot of the popular party against both the rival Arsacids, the two contenders came to an agreement, under which Vardanes was to retain the throne, and Gotarzes to retire to Hyrcania. Vardanes was next able to secure the capitulation of Seleucia, the city having been in revolt for seven years.

An interesting sidelight is provided on the reign of Vardanes by the journey across Babylonia at this time of the itinerant Greek philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana.¹ Confidence in the reliability of this account is strengthened by the fact that its later description of the Indo-Parthian city of Taxila was substantially confirmed by excavation.² The tale of the journey across Babylonia conveys a certain tone of credulity, but is avowedly based on the diary of the philosopher's companion, the simpleton Damis. Its details are, however, convincing enough. Vardanes had been reigning for two years and two months when the travellers found him residing at Babylon, and the episodes of palace life, and a lavish horse-sacrifice, sound wholly in character.

At this time Vardanes undertook a tour of his provinces,³ and tried to persuade his vassal Izates of Adiabene to take military action against the Roman interests in Armenia.⁴ This Izates was unwilling to do, since five of his sons were then in Roman territory, whereat Vardanes even threatened war with Adiabene. Gotarzes meanwhile rose once more in revolt against his brother, who advanced and defeated him on the river Erindes,⁵ a stream on the boundary of Media and Hyrcania. Vardanes pressed on to conquer all the provinces as far as the boundary of Aria, and erected a monument to commemorate his triumphs; but was finally murdered during a hunting expedition, his death taking place towards the end of A.D. 45. Gotarzes (II) was now the strongest candidate for the throne, but before long, complaints of his ruthlessness were once more circulating, and a faction of the Parthian nobles sent secret appeals to the Roman emperor to provide another king.

The latest pretender was Meherdates, grandson of Phraates IV, the

¹ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, ed. F. C. Conybeare (London, 1912), I. 28-40.

² Sir John Marshall, *Taxila* (Cambridge, 1951), I, 64. Cf. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* II. 20, 23.

³ Tacitus, *Annals* XI. 10.

⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 69.

⁵ A reading of Tacitus emended by Ryck to "Charindas", on the strength of Ptolemy, *Geographia* VI. 2. 2.

THE "ROMAN PEACE"

story of whose bid for the Parthian throne forms a picturesque episode in the narrative of Tacitus.¹ The account opens with a glimpse of the senatorial debate, in which the historian summarizes the persuasive speech of the Parthian nobles. There follows the sententious reply of Claudius, who likened himself to Augustus, clumsily exhorting Meherdates to treat his future subjects with respect, and to the Parthians lauding this "pupil of the City", urging them to remain constant to the new ruler, and avoid fickle changes of their kings. Rome, he concluded, had grown so great that she only wished neighbouring powers to be at peace.

Finally in A.D. 49, the governor of Syria, Gaius Cassius, escorted Meherdates to the Euphrates. He crossed at Zeugma (Birecik), to be welcomed on the eastern bank by Abgar, ruler of Edessa. Messages were received from his supporter Carenēs,² the Parthian governor of Mesopotamia, urging him to hasten forwards. Yet the inexperienced prince dawdled at Edessa, and then from the direct route turned aside into Armenia, which was already suffering in the grip of winter. By the time his men had reached the Tigris they were in poor shape, but they joined forces with Carenēs and made the crossing. Izates of Adiabene also attached himself to the invading army, but secretly his sympathies were with Gotarzes; so the combined force pressed on past the ruins of Nineveh and the citadel of Arbēla.³

Meanwhile, in anticipation of the conflict, Gotarzes was occupied in religious observances near the mountain of Sanbulos. Tacitus gives an eerie account of the cult of a hunter-god whom he identifies with Hercules, at whose temple horses saddled for hunting were kept ready at nightfall. They were taken out into the darkness with full quivers, to return later breathless and with the quivers empty. Later the priests were informed in a vision of the way by which the god had passed, and went out to collect the animals that had been brought down. The legend has often been linked with the cult of the Assyrian deity Nergal, god of hunting as of war and victory, whose worship was no doubt identified by Iranians with their cult of Mithra. The scene of the hunting-fresco at Dura-Europos⁴ corresponds with that which Tacitus

¹ *Annals* XII. 10–14.

² The Latin spelling represents the hereditary title Kārēn, New Persian Qārīn, which designated one of the six great families of Parthian, as later of Sasanian Iran.

³ I accept here as well founded the gloss of the Agricola manuscript of Tacitus. Some of the editors of Tacitus, including H. Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus*, II, 76n, maintain that the words *castellum insigne fama* refer to a fort actually at the village of Gaugamela.

⁴ M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford, 1938), pl. XVIIIa (= Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos* (Oxford, 1973), pl. 16).

envisaged. The name of Hercules has been found in a Greek inscription at Karafto¹ in Iranian Kurdistan, and suggests it was the site of a similar cult; since evidence for topography in the brief Latin account is scanty, it may not have been the identical spot at which Gotarzes offered his vows. The latter's objective was to defend the line of a river named as the Corma, perhaps the present-day Lesser Zāb. Gotarzes employed delaying-tactics, and induced first Izates, and later Abgar, to desert the invading force. Soon Meherdates was forced by his deteriorating situation to risk a battle; and Gotarzes was encouraged by his enemy's reduced numbers to accept it. The issue of the sanguinary encounter hung in the balance, until Carenas, pressing a pursuit too far, was surrounded and overthrown. Meherdates abandoned the struggle, entrusting his safety to his father's vassal Parrax,² by whom, however, he was betrayed, and handed over to the victor. Gotarzes contemptuously spared the pretender's life, cutting off his ears to disqualify him from the throne, and publicly reviling him as a Roman puppet.

A word must be said at this point about the attribution by Herzfeld of a rock-sculpture at Bīsītūn to the second Gotarzes.³ This sculpture adjoins another which bears the name of Mithradates II (pp. 41ff., above), and of which the accompanying inscription mentions a Gotarzes described as "Satrap of satraps". Presumably he was the same personage who later ascended the throne as Gotarzes I. No evidence is provided by Herzfeld to substantiate his case that the neighbouring sculpture represents a *different* Gotarzes. Moreover, the inscription over the relief with which we are now concerned mentions "*Gotarzes Geopothros*" "Gotarzes the son of Gēv". Gotarzes II was actually the son of the Arsacid Artabanus III, and could hardly have been described as "the son of Gēv", which seems to be an argument against Herzfeld's interpretation. Moreover the sculpture is too similar to the other in treatment and style, having apparently similar Greek inscriptions, to be dated as much as a hundred and fifty years later. Now that the importance of the historical role of Gotarzes I can be better appreciated than in Herzfeld's time, the ascription of rock-sculptures to his later namesake can hardly be supported.

¹ Sir Aurel Stein, "An archaeological journey in western Iran", *GJ* xcii. 4 (1938), 336, and *Old Routes of Western Iran* (London, 1940), pp. 326-44, esp. p. 340.

² This Latin form represents the Parthian name "Farrak".

³ *Archaeological History of Iran* (London, 1935) p. 56.

IRAN UNDER THE ARSACIDS

CONTINUATION OF CONFLICT WITH ROME OVER ARMENIA

In A.D. 51, apparently the year after his victory, Gotarzes II died, either of disease,¹ or as the result of a conspiracy.² He was succeeded by Vonones, then reigning in Media, of whom history records "nothing either good or bad", and who disappeared within a few months. The son³ of the last then acceded to the throne, under the designation of Vologeses I. The son of a Greek inmate of the harem, his rise to the throne was assisted by his two brothers. The elder, Pacorus, he installed as sub-king in Atropatene; for the younger, Tiridates, he sought to obtain the throne of Armenia, which was at this time under the control of Rhadamistus, son of the Iberian king Pharasmenes. Rhadamistus had invaded the country and captured the stronghold of Gorneae, putting to death there the Roman nominee Mithradates (who was in fact his uncle) together with the wife and children of the latter. Gorneae is the now well-known archaeological site of Garni, in Soviet Armenia, situated twenty-seven kilometres east of Erevan, in the confluence of two rivers.⁴ The monuments include the city-wall, a remarkable temple and a palace,⁵ together with a Greek inscription of the already mentioned Tiridates, who eventually became king of Armenia, and indeed one of its most famous and successful rulers on the Arsacid side.

The uncontrolled aggression of Rhadamistus, in which Pollio, the Roman commander of Mithradates' garrison had actually connived,⁶ reflected most unfavourably on the Roman authorities and policy. The moment was ripe for Vologeses of Parthia to invade the country on behalf of Tiridates, and his cavalry promptly drove out the Iberian forces of Rhadamistus. The capitals of Artaxata and Tigranocerta were quickly seized, but the onset of a bitter winter, lack of supplies, and the outbreak of an epidemic forced the Parthians to withdraw in their turn. Rhadamistus returned, treating his subjects even more harshly than he had previously; and before long they were in open rebellion and

¹ Tacitus, *Annals* XII. 14.

² Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 74.

³ According to Tacitus, *Annals* XII. 14, the more substantial authority; Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 74, makes no mention of the ephemeral Vonones, and calls Vologeses the brother, apparently of Gotarzes.

⁴ A. Mongait, *Archaeology in the USSR* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 226-8; Pelican edition (London, 1961), pp. 214-15.

⁵ D. M. Lang, *Armenia, Cradle of Civilization* (London, 1971), pp. 144-5.

⁶ The detailed narrative of these events is given by Tacitus, *Annals* XII. 44-52.

laid siege to his palace. Soon his only recourse was to escape, with his wife, both on horseback. The queen, Zenobia by name, happened to be pregnant, and was not long able to withstand the rigours of the flight. Unable to continue, she begged her husband to end her life rather than abandon her to the rebels; and when no entreaties prevailed on her to go further, Rhadamistus in desperation stabbed her with his Median dagger, flung her body into the Araxes, and made his escape to his father's palace at Mtskheta. Zenobia, however, was neither dead nor fatally injured. The current washed her up in a placid back-water, where shepherds found her breathing, and manifestly alive. They bound up her wound, applied such simple remedies as they possessed, and eventually, guessing her royal origin, sent her to the Parthian contender Tiridates, who shortly afterwards re-established his power in the country. He received the unfortunate queen kindly, and provided for her in a manner appropriate to her rank.

It is a feature of the surviving historical tradition on Parthia, derived as it is chiefly from Roman sources, that it forms an interminable catalogue of military expeditions, and shows little interest in Parthian manners or aspirations. The few Parthians mentioned in the narrative are depicted as shadowy figures, and enlightening insights are rare, though not wholly lacking. Latin authors tended to share the obsession of the Roman public, itself no doubt often stimulated by official propaganda, with revenge for the ancient disasters of Crassus and Antony. A succession of ruthless, stubborn, but no doubt efficiently conducted Roman invasions dominate the last century and a half of the story, and it is chiefly from their rather inconclusive itineraries that some details can be gained of Parthian culture and topography. Armenia, a country now increasingly permeated by Parthian influences, and traditionally ruled by princes of Arsacid descent, remained throughout the bone of contention. Direct Roman administration was only sporadically attempted, and never lasted long. For the rest, the influence of Rome was chiefly applied to intrigues designed to undermine Parthian authority, and to the setting up of nominees to counterbalance the Arsacid contenders.¹ Marching and counter-marching designed to support these policies inevitably inflicted great devastation on Armenian cultural life and its main urban centres, with the ultimate result that the Parthian element in the country continued to grow. At the same

¹ There exists a voluminous modern critical literature on the wars and diplomatic manoeuvres of Rome in relation to Armenia. See, for example, the items listed by Debevoise, p. 174, n. 101.

CONFLICT OVER ARMENIA

time, Roman policies designed to wear down the Parthian kingdom, combined with dynastic feuds, and the terrible smallpox epidemic of A.D. 165, eventually so weakened the Arsacid state that it succumbed, not indeed to the Romans, but to the far more highly organized and centralized Sasanian kingdom. Thus Rome was in the end provided with a far more powerful antagonist, while the last pockets of specifically Arsacid tradition survived for several generations not in Iran but in Armenia.

In A.D. 54 Nero succeeded Claudius as emperor at Rome. News of the Parthian reoccupation of Armenia caused dismay, and the eastern legions were ordered into a state of readiness. For the moment, however, the rebellion against the Parthian king Vologeses I of a son, Vardanes, caused the Parthians to withdraw again from Armenia, and led to a lull in developments. A seasoned general, Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, was transferred from Germany to take command of the Roman forces on the Armenian frontier. Both Corbulo and the Roman legate of Syria sent messages to Vologeses urging him to keep the peace, and asking for the provision of the usual hostages. These Vologeses provided without reluctance, perhaps, as Tacitus suggests, as a means of removing suspected rebels from the country. For the moment, a political vacuum prevailed in Armenia. Vologeses would not allow his brother to give up the kingdom, and Corbulo felt it his duty to restore the Roman empire to the boundaries won by Lucullus and by Pompey. The allegiance of the Armenians was divided. Invitations were sent to both armies, Roman and Parthian, but the rule of Parthia was on the whole preferred, on account of the similarity of customs, and more lenient domination.

Corbulo was a stern old disciplinarian of the traditional school. His rigorous training had a salutary effect on the eastern legions enervated by decades of peacetime conditions. He caused them to spend the winter in tents on the Anatolian plateau, thus seasoning the troops, though many lost limbs by frost-bite. Deserters were at once punished with death, a practice found in the aggregate to reduce losses. Tiridates, supported by his brother Vologeses, now sent flying columns to raid Roman supporters in Armenia far and wide. Corbulo retaliated with similar tactics against the Parthian adherents, and encouraged such Roman allies as King Antiochus of Commagene, Pharasmenes of Iberia, and the Moschi tribesmen to raid outlying regions of Armenia. Tiridates proposed negotiations, but Corbulo knew that because of a

revolt in Hyrcania Vologeses had been obliged to withdraw his forces and leave Tiridates unsupported. Mention must here be made of the broader political implications of references to Hyrcania which appear in the narrative of Tacitus. In Central Asia by this time, A.D. 59, the empire of the Kushāns was rising to a position of great strength. Within a year or two they were to invade the Punjab and occupy Taxila.¹ To the west there is little doubt that Kushān control extended at least as far as Marv. It is surprising that in the historical literature of the earlier Roman empire, the kingdom of the Kushāns is never specifically named. Occasional references in Latin texts to the "Bactrians" may at times relate to the movements of the Kushāns,² but only in the vaguest terms. The only extant writer of the classical world to make specific mention of the Kushāns was Bardesanes of Edessa,³ the genuineness of whose information on eastern topics is attested by his giving the first description of the people of Gilān, on the Caspian coast; amongst whom, as any recent traveller knows, the bulk of the agricultural work is undertaken by the women. Modern historical knowledge of the strength of the Kushān empire, and its close proximity to Hyrcania, shows how powerful would have been the threat to which Vologeses reacted, and which resulted in the way being opened for Corbulo's invasion of Armenia.

The Roman force is thought to have advanced eastwards from the vicinity of present-day Erzurum. A suggested conference, which was to be held in the presence of both armies, proved abortive; but Tiridates was not able to interfere with Roman supplies being brought up from the Black Sea coast. The outlying Armenian castles were attacked and stormed, the most important of these being the stronghold of Volandum. No quarter was given to the survivors of the garrison, and the civilian inhabitants were deported and sold as slaves. Thence the large Roman force marched down the valley of the Araxes, its left flank resting on the foothills, and drove off the unsupported cavalry force of Tiridates. The capital city of Artaxata had to open its gates, but though the lives of the citizens were therefore spared, the walls were levelled and the entire city burnt to the ground. From Artaxata,

¹ See below, Ch. 5.

² For example the famous phrase *μαχιμώτατον ἔθνος Βακτριανῶν* . . . in Ch. 47 of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, as emended by J. Kennedy, "A passage in the Periplus", *JRAS* 1913, p. 127; for a different interpretation, see J. A. B. Palmer, "Periplus Maris Erythraei: remarks on Chapter 47", *Classical Quarterly* XLIII (1949), 61-4.

³ *The Book of the Laws of Countries*, ed. H. J. W. Drijvers (Assen, 1965), p. 47.

CONFLICT OVER ARMENIA

Corbulo marched back, apparently round the eastern shore of Lake Van, to deal with Tigranocerta. The citizens of Armenia's southern capital reckoned discretion the better part of valour, and opened their gates to receive the Roman army, who spent the winter of A.D. 59 in the city. The success of Corbulo's campaign had been greatly assisted by the fact that the Parthians were occupied in their Hyrcanian war. Hyrcanian ambassadors had reached Corbulo, apparently at Artaxata, to point out the services they were rendering the Roman cause. He had sent them on to Rome to conclude an alliance with the emperor; but when they returned, he did not allow them to travel eastwards across the Euphrates, for fear of their being intercepted by Parthian patrols; instead he sent them with an escort to the shores of the Red Sea, "to reach their home by avoiding Parthian territory".¹ Interpretations of this striking phrase have been various, but there is little doubt that the opinion of Rawlinson is the most satisfactory:² the envoys would have returned by sea via India, since only thus could they have avoided Parthian controls. That it was possible to reach Hyrcania by so huge a detour resulted from the expansion of the Kushān empire at this time. The Hyrcanians in question will either have been Kushān allies, or the term used by Tacitus in fact referred to a Kushān force that was operating on the soil of Hyrcania.

After the removal of Corbulo to Tigranocerta, Tiridates returned to northern Armenia from Atropatene. In the spring, probably of A.D. 60, the Roman force marched out once more to drive him back. Intransigent districts were ravaged with fire and sword, and Nero resolved to place Tigranes, a Cappadocian prince, upon the throne. He was installed at Tigranocerta with a strong Roman escort: one thousand legionaries, three allied regiments and two squadrons of cavalry. Soon the new ruler had gained so much confidence that he began to raid the boundaries of Adiabene. Monobazus, sub-king of that region at the time, appealed to Vologeses, and once more the Parthian royal army, under the command of a certain Monaeses, swept into Armenia and besieged Tigranocerta. The city, however, was strongly held, and Corbulo had sent in two legions to strengthen the defenders. After several unsuccessful attempts at escalade, in which the contingents from Adiabene sustained heavy losses, the Parthian force began to lose heart. Corbulo now sent to the

¹ Tacitus, *Annals* xiv. 25: Dato praesidio ad litora maris rubri deduxit, unde vitatis Parthorum finibus patrias in sedes remeavere.

² Rawlinson, *Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy*, p. 271 n.

king an officer with a message of protest, threatening to invade Parthian territory if the siege was not raised. Even more decisive, at this moment, was the descent of a large swarm of locusts. By devouring all the pasture required by the Parthian cavalry, they put Monaeses in a danger from which he was only extricated when Vologeses, thirty (Roman) miles away at Nisibis, expressed a wish to send an embassy to the Roman emperor, and ordered his forces to withdraw. Though this may have been partly a diplomatic manoeuvre, it seems true that a genuine wish for settlement of the Armenian deadlock was gaining ground on both sides. To Corbulo came orders to withdraw his troops from Armenia to Syria; then, when the Parthian ambassadors returned unsuccessful, a new Roman general, Caesinius Paetus, arrived to take over the Armenian command. He was to place Armenia under direct Roman rule. As a general, however, he was in no way the equal of Corbulo, and it was not long before he found himself in difficulties. His troops were concentrated at Rhandeia, in the valley of the Murād Şū¹ eastwards of the present Elazig. His wife and son, with a detached cohort, were left for safety nearby at Arsamosata. His attempt to block the Taurus passes against Vologeses was a failure, and his advance guard having been scattered, the remainder of his men were besieged in their legionary camp. Soon the Romans were in difficult straits. An appeal for help was sent to Corbulo in Syria, but while he was still three marches away, Paetus came to terms with Vologeses, agreeing to evacuate Armenia and abandon his camp, on condition that he was allowed to retreat unhindered to Cappadocia. The Romans even undertook to construct a bridge across the River Arsanias (Murād Şū) for the benefit of the advancing Parthians, before their departure. Their retreat by forced marches to the Euphrates, where they met the relieving army of Corbulo, is depicted as a humiliating rout. It had also been agreed that Vologeses should again be permitted to send emissaries to Nero, who arrived at the same time as evasive dispatches from Paetus. The ambassadors lauded the moderation of Vologeses, and proposed that Tiridates should come to Rome to receive from Nero's hands the diadem of Armenia, a duty from which he was only deterred by his religious obligations as a Magian priest. The delegation were dismissed with gifts, but without a decision, and Nero determined to renew the war under Corbulo's command. Four legions were concen-

¹ Bernard W. Henderson, "Controversies on Armenian topography: II. Rhandeia and the River Arsanias", *Journal of Philology* LVI (1903), 271-86.

CONFLICT OVER ARMENIA

trated at Melitene (Malatya) with all their auxiliaries, and Corbulo pressed eastwards, reopening the route used by Lucullus. He drove out of their strongholds the Armenian barons or *megistanæ* known as hostile to the Romans. The Parthians were none the less disinclined to push matters to extremes, and sent letters requesting negotiations. To these Corbulo replied in conciliatory terms, and eventually there was an impressive meeting of the two armies, hostages were exchanged, and Corbulo held a meeting with Tiridates. The latter stressed that he had suffered no defeat, yet that he was ready to go to Rome and receive the diadem of Armenia from the hands of Nero. Tiridates observed with interest the routines and ceremonies of the Roman army; and after a visit to his brothers Vologeses and Pacorus at Ecbatana, and after assurances that he would be received in Roman territory with the honours accorded to a consul, retaining his sword and being received in state by the provincial governors, he was ready to set out on the elaborate overland journey to Rome that his priestly scruples were said to demand.¹ He paid homage to Nero at Naples, and re-enacted the ceremony publicly at Rome. There he was declared king of Armenia, and invested with the diadem, before departing, this time partly by sea to Dyrrachium, to return to Artaxata. Thus after a ding-dong battle for control of the region, Armenia was finally settled as a juridical condominium, with an Arsacid ruler who received his investiture from the Roman emperor. None the less, in practical terms, the Parthian influence in the region was now overwhelming. Thus with Tiridates I the Arsacids were established in Armenia, and the Roman military demonstrations availed only to hasten the outcome that they were designed to avert.

The claim by Latin writers that Tiridates possessed the status of a Magian priest draws attention also to religious developments in Parthia under Vologeses I. According to an interpretation of passages in the *Vendidad* and the *Dēnkart*, Vologeses may have been the ruler responsible for an early collection of scriptural texts which later developed into the Avesta.² The consensus of specialist opinion is, however, inclined to reject the view that a *written*, rather than an orally transmitted text of the Avesta existed in Arsacid times,³ so that it is in the latter context that this tradition has to be seen. The name of Vologeses,

¹ Tacitus, *Annals* xv. 31, which closes that author's account of Parthian affairs in the *Annals*. Cf. xv. 24.

² Debevoise, p. 196.

³ M. Boyce, "Middle Persian literature", *HO* iv, section 2, no. 1, p. 33; H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-century Books*, 151.

a figure of major distinction amongst the Arsacid rulers, is also perpetuated by his part in the foundation of the city in Babylonia which was variously known as Vologesias, Vologesocerta or Valāshābād. It has been shown by Maricq that all three names apply to the same city, situated on the Royal Canal some five kilometres south-west of Seleucia.¹ The new foundation may have served two purposes for Arsacid policy at this time. On the one hand, it provided a replacement for the alien city of Seleucia, of which since its rebellion the Parthian kings had sought steadily to diminish the influence in the kingdom. Secondly, it may have provided a remedy for the silting of the original harbour at Seleucia, which by this date may well have become increasingly inconvenient, and ripe for replacement by the new entrepot at the entrance to an improved Royal Canal. In harmony with the trends here noted in the home policy of Vologeses I, of reducing the influence of the Hellenistic element, and increasing that of the Magians and their literature, we find also that on the Arsacid drachma coinage of the Iranian plateau, the Greek inscriptions were allowed to become virtually indecipherable, and new inscriptions in Parthian script, on the obverse of the coin, and at first abbreviated, were provided to indicate the identity of the ruler who issued them.

It was part of the achievement of Vologeses that the stable peace between the two empires after A.D. 64 resulted in a dearth of information on Parthia from western sources. Apart from routine diplomatic exchanges, only an invasion of Parthian territory by the Alans of south Russia, themselves an Iranian people, in A.D. 72 or soon after, attracted the attention of the historians.²

TRAJAN'S PARTHIAN WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

Vologeses I remained upon the Parthian throne until A.D. 79, the year of his last known dated tetradrachm. Yet already in A.D. 78, a rival, Pacorus II, was issuing dated coins from the mint of Seleucia, and must have been contending with him for possession of the mint-city. In A.D. 80-1 another pretender, Artabanus IV, briefly issued coins at that mint, but by A.D. 83 Pacorus was again the only ruler attested. Such indications of internal conflict in the Arsacid kingdom suggest conditions which could once more have tempted the Roman emperors

¹ A. Maricq, "Vologésias, l'emporium de Ctésiphon", *Classica et Orientalia* (Paris, 1965), pp. 113-25.

² Debevoise, p. 200, citing Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* VII, 244-51, and Suetonius, *Domitian* 2. 2.

to launch a campaign against their traditional adversary. Vespasian (A.D. 70–9), as Roman commander in Judaea before his accession, had maintained amicable, or at least neutral, relations with Vologeses I.¹ Domitian (A.D. 81–96) apparently dreamed of a great expedition in the East, but it was the soldier emperor Trajan (A.D. 98–117) who developed a practical plan, and put it into effect. In Parthia, the coinage of Pacorus came to an end in A.D. 96/7. A second Vologeses appears on the coinage in A.D. 105/6, and was soon contesting the throne with one Osroes, the brother or brother-in-law of Pacorus. As usual the immediate cause of friction with Rome arose from the situation in Armenia. Osroes deposed a certain Tiridates from the Armenian throne, and put in his place a certain Axidares, the son of Pacorus II. The decision was taken without consultation with Rome, and may thus have provided the *casus belli*. After the conclusion of the Dacian war, on 27 October 113, Trajan set sail for the east. An embassy from Osroes met the emperor at Athens, expressing their master's desire for peace, and informing him that Axidares had now been deposed from the Armenian throne, and requesting his replacement by his brother Parthamasiris. However, Trajan rejected the request, and indeed the presents brought by the embassy.

At this point a word must be said about the sources available for the expedition of Trajan. Unlike the previous Roman campaigns, it lacks a continuous and accurate narrative. A major historian, Arrian, accompanied the force, and described its operations in his *Parthica*, but the work did not survive intact. It is known from fragments in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, citations in the dictionaries of Suidas and Stephanus Byzantinus, and from book LXVIII of Dio Cassius. The latter in turn is preserved in two Byzantine collections of excerpts, and in the epitome of Xiphilinus of which portions are transmitted by Zonaras. Because of this fragmentary transmission, it is not always easy to place isolated episodes, or fix the sequence of events.² Independent of the Arrian tradition is the account of Malalas, a version thought to possess authority of its own based on local records from Antioch, but of rather uneven reliability and quality. To these two narratives, neither wholly satisfactory, some fixed points are added by the evidence of Latin inscriptions; and Roman coins provide a few additional hints.

¹ Tacitus, *Histories* II. 82; IV. 51; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 6; Dio Cassius LXV.

² A modern study of this episode is provided by F. A. Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War*, Oxford, 1948. The nature of the sources is explained on pp. 1–5, 9–25.

Trajan devoted the year A.D. 114 to a campaign in Armenia. He established his advanced base at Melitene (Malatya), where letters were received from Parthamasiris. Later he pushed forward to Arsamosata, and eventually to Satala. At Elegia, not far to the west of Erzerum, an interview was granted to Parthamasiris. The latter, following the precedent of Tiridates, removed his diadem and placed it before Trajan, expecting to have it replaced on his head; but the emperor made no such move. After the Arsacid had complained of his treatment he was permitted to withdraw, but his Roman cavalry escort brought him to a halt, and apparently on Trajan's order, killed him on the spot. The Roman army then proceeded with the detailed "pacification" of Armenia, even attacking the Mardi, who were said to live on the eastern side of Lake Van. Thus Armenia was once more made into a Roman province, and a procuratorial governor appointed. For his part in this campaign the emperor received the title "Optimus Princeps".

In the following season (A.D. 115) Trajan turned south to deal with northern Mesopotamia. Here the plan was to reduce Nisibis – hitherto the stronghold of the Parthian frontier zone – and the border kingdom of Edessa. A new, and shortened, Roman border was to be established further to the south on the line of the Chaboras river and the Jabal Sinjār. A milestone of Trajan bearing the title *Parthicus*, granted as a consequence of this campaign, was reported from the village of Karshi on the route from Nisibis to Singara.¹ The Parthian coinage issued at Seleucia during this period suggests by its alternations that a dynastic struggle was in progress between Osroes (Khusrau), currently in control of Babylonia, and Vologeses II in Iran. Such a division in the control of the Parthian kingdom was becoming increasingly usual as the 2nd century advanced, and contributed to the weakening of Parthian defence against external invaders. Moreover, it has been further suggested that Pacorus II was still alive and pursuing his claims at the same time, a view which the attribution to him of copper coins of Seleucia dated A.D. 114/5 seems to confirm. Throughout the campaign of Trajan in Upper Mesopotamia, there is no report of intervention by Osroes or his army, except for his brief demonstration against Manisares, a dissident Parthian vassal in Gordyene. Mebarsapes, ruler of Adiabene, between the Greater and Lesser Zāb rivers, was the main leader of what resistance could be offered. He was aided from time to time by other local chiefs, of whom the most celebrated was the phylarch Sporaces, whose fort at Halibiya on the Euphrates is

¹ R. Cagnat, "Inscription romaine du Sindjar au nom de Trajan" *Syria* VIII (1927), 53-4.

mentioned by Shāpūr the Great in his *Res Gestae*.¹ Trajan overcame all opposition and retired to spend the winter of A.D. 115/6 at Antioch, where he narrowly escaped injury in the severe earthquake which took place in December of that year.

It is necessary at this point in the narrative to consider a question of terminology in the accounts of the following season's campaign. The Iranian rulers applied to the province known in the west as Babylonia (of which the capital at this time was of course no longer Babylon but at the city-complex of Seleucia-Ctesiphon) the name of Asūristān.² The term had been transferred from the more northerly region of historical Assyria probably as long ago as the reign of the Achaemenian king Xerxes.³ In conformity with the current Parthian usage, some western historians used the term "Assyria" as a calque on Asūristān, with reference to Babylonia.⁴ Northern Mesopotamia, lately conquered by Trajan, was known to the Iranians as Arabistān, and this was also sometimes rendered by western historians as Arabia – a term more familiar in the west as applying to other regions of Arab population. Moreover, the lands east of the Tigris, situated between the Greater and Lesser Zāb rivers, were in this period correctly known to the western historians as Adiabene (Aramaic Ḥedayab; Parthian Norši-rakān), but occasionally designated as Assyria in accordance with the obsolete terminology. Difficulties of interpretation arising from such ambiguities have to be watched in reading classical accounts of the expeditions of Trajan and of later Roman generals.

Early in A.D. 116 Trajan marched out of the greatly damaged city of Antioch, and, according to a widely current interpretation of the fragmentary sources, struck across eastwards to the Tigris and forced a crossing on to its eastern bank. This version may arise from the misunderstanding of the term "Assyria", for it was none the less certain that the main Roman thrust in the campaign that followed was along the line of the Euphrates. The triumphal arch found by the excavators of Dura Europos suggests that the emperor in person had passed that way. It was the first occasion on which this caravan city had passed from Parthian into Roman hands. The references to Phalga and Naarda (Nehārdē'ā) in the gazetteer of Stephanus Byzantinus are ascribed to the *Parthica* of Arrian, so these places must have figured as stages in the same march. Modern commentators have been concerned

¹ Honigmann and Maricq, *Recherches sur les "Res gestae divi Saporis"*, p. 162.

² *Ibid.* p. 41.

³ Herodotus III. 92.

⁴ Maricq, "La province d' 'Assyrie' créée par Trajan", *Classica et Orientalia*, p. 108.

to discuss whether the Roman plan was to advance along the Tigris, along the Euphrates, or by a two-pronged offensive along both routes at once. It is not clear, if the emperor himself first accompanied the army of the Tigris, how he made his way back to the Euphrates in time to accompany the main force. The objective was Ctesiphon, which lies, of course, east of the Tigris, and could therefore conveniently have been approached by either route. There is no specific mention in the sources of the Royal Canal (Nehar Malkā), but presumably that alignment was followed, since at a certain point it became possible for the boats to be hauled on carts from the "Euphrates" to the Tigris. No reference is made at this stage to Seleucia, but the city was evidently defended by the Parthians, a fact which may account for the difficulty experienced by the Romans in taking their boats all the way by water down to the Tigris.

Whatever the precise plan of campaign, Ctesiphon was captured by Trajan without resistance. The Parthian king Osroes had made good his escape, and the Romans were not only successful in capturing his golden throne, but his daughter too was found amongst the prisoners. It was after this unprecedented success that Trajan received confirmation of the grant to him by the Senate of the title Parthicus. The Roman army then set sail upon the Tigris with a fleet of fifty ships, and sailed down the river to the kingdom of Mesene (Maišān), also known as Characene. The ruler at this time was Attambelos V, who made his submission to Trajan and paid tribute. The Roman frontier had thus been boldly extended from the Euphrates up to the Tigris. For an incredible moment a Roman emperor stood on the shores of the Persian Gulf, and dreamed, like Alexander, of new worlds to conquer. As a traveller will, he watched the ships setting sail for India, and the late writer Jordanes even claims that a statue of the emperor was erected on the shore.¹ The greatest of Roman emperors could hardly have been unaware that beyond the Iranian plateau the Kushān empire was rising to its zenith in Bactria and India, and that its ports could be reached by sea. Yet he must already have guessed that his own days were numbered, and the very speed of his conquests made them insecure. By the time he had reached Babylon on his return up the Euphrates, word arrived that the newly won territories were in general revolt and massacring his garrisons. A special effort had to be made to regain control long enough to effect the retreat of the Roman armies.

¹ Jordanes, *Romana* 268; cf. Debevoise, p. 234.

TRAJAN'S PARTHIAN WAR

The general Lucius Quietus captured Nisibis and sacked Edessa. Erucius Clarus and Julius Alexander now for the first time took, and burnt, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. The Parthian forces on the middle Euphrates were commanded by a brother of Osroes named Meherdotes. He fell from his horse and was killed, to be succeeded in the command by his son Sanatruces, who also achieved some successes. Osroes sent a large Parthian army to the aid of Sanatruces under the command of his son Parthamaspates, but discord arose between the two leaders. Parthamaspates was persuaded at a secret meeting with Trajan to attack his cousin, whom he defeated, captured and killed. After this diplomatic success, Trajan assembled the remaining Parthians at Ctesiphon, and invested Parthamaspates with the diadem. This is the event celebrated by the famous Roman coins with the inscription *REX PARTHIS DATUS*.

In A.D. 117 Trajan at last retreated from Babylonia, following the third of the possible routes northwards, the central route of the Wadi Thartar, which passes the caravan city of Hatra. The fortified, circular city in the heart of the desert had been a pivot of Parthian military resistance. Its mixed populations, Iranian, Arab and Aramaean, were united in devotion to the Arsacid cause. Trajan laid siege to the fortifications, but the barrenness of the surrounding country, the terrible heat and the maddening swarms of flies all added to the hardships of the Roman soldiers. Even when a breach had been made in the walls, several determined attacks failed, and the Roman army was forced to withdraw to their own frontier. By the autumn of A.D. 117 the Romans had not only withdrawn completely from Babylonia, they had even evacuated their troops once more from Dura-Europos. Meanwhile, the health of the emperor Trajan was failing. He had set out on his return to Italy, but died in August at Selinus in Cilicia. His successor, Hadrian, wisely decided to revert to the traditional frontier on the Euphrates.

The successful defence of Hatra against the Romans inaugurated a period of great prosperity for that city. Excavations conducted over a number of years by the Iraq government have revealed a remarkable wealth of temples, sculptures and inscriptions within the walls.¹ Some of the leading personages bear Iranian, Aramaic or even Arab names. That the Parthian influence is strong is made clear by the splendid Parthian costumes of many of the statues, consisting of the typical shirt (*qamis*) and trousers represented as made from richly ornamented

¹ Cf. D. Homès-Fredericq, *Hatra et ses sculptures Parthes: Étude stylistique et iconographique* (Istanbul, 1963).

materials. The dates of several of the finest sculptures are grouped between Seleucid 444/132 and Seleucid 449/137, and some make mention of a king named Sanatruk (Sinatruces), whom Debevoise sought to link, but inconclusively, with the Parthian general who led resistance to the Romans. However, the king of Hatra is more likely to have been a namesake than a descendant of Trajan's Parthian opponent.

THE LAST CENTURY OF ARSACID RULE

The closing decades of the Parthian empire show a marked diminution in the volume of historical source-material, and consequent reduction of detailed information. The nearest approach to a continuous account is provided by references in the later books of Dio Cassius. There are also occasional brief statements in the *Augustan History*. Naturally such evidence is largely confined to notices of the Roman campaigns, and of Parthian diplomatic exchanges with Rome. The continuing evidence of the Arsacid coinage, and especially its dated issues from the mint of Seleucia, provides a chronological thread, though one by no means free of interruption. The research and discoveries of recent years have added one or two pieces of valuable information, shortly to be examined, but they have also cast grave doubt on an authority of some extent which had previously been accorded general credence. This is the so-called *Chronicle of Arbela*, attributed to a certain Mšihā Zkha,¹ which until the last few years was utilized as reliable by leading historians. The hesitations felt as to its worth by Syriac scholars have lately gained emphasis as a result of two critical studies.² Their conclusion seems to be that the work in question is a fabrication, compiled indeed by a scholar well informed on the classical and Syriac authors, but that the text is wholly devoid of independent ancient authority. To these criticisms a further point might be added: that where the *Chronicle* offers information additional to that of the ancient sources, none of these details has found confirmation in the more recently discovered *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*. Thus it is probably right to delete information derived from this *Chronicle* from the repertoire of present-day historians of Parthia.

The Parthians did not long endure the turncoat Parthamaspatēs.

¹ Sachau, "Die Chronik von Arbela", *APAW* 1915, no. 6.

² J. Assfalg, "Zur textüberlieferung der Chronik von Arbela", *Oriens Christianus* L (1966), 19-36; J.-M. Fiey, "Auteur et date de la Chronique d'Arbèles", *L'Orient Syrien* XII (1967), 265-302.

He escaped to Roman territory, and was there entrusted with the government of Osroene, the province of Edessa. Once again, the evidence of coins suggests that the Parthian kingdom was divided. Vologeses III was contending against Osroes, and though Hadrian eventually returned to the latter his daughter, in the same year, 128/9, the coinage of Osroes ceased. The next contender with whom Vologeses was faced was Mithradates IV in Iran. The name of the latter is known from the long Parthian legend on the reverse of his coinage. In May A.D. 148 Vologeses III was succeeded by Vologeses IV, whose long reign continued until March A.D. 192. Throughout the reign of Antoninus Pius at Rome, peace prevailed on the Euphrates frontier. Only with the accession of Marcus Aurelius in A.D. 161 did the threat of hostilities return. According to the western sources, Vologeses launched the first offensive soon after the new ruler's accession. A Roman army was destroyed at Elegia in Armenia under Severianus, and Parthian forces poured across the Euphrates into Syria, after retaking Edessa. The Romans reacted by concentrating eight legions in Syria under Lucius Verus, the colleague of the emperor. Two expeditionary forces were mustered; the first, under Statius Priscus, swept into Armenia in A.D. 163 and apparently placed one Sohaemus on the throne. In the following year, the second force, under Avidius Cassius, invaded Mesopotamia. Dura-Europos was recaptured, and henceforth remained in Roman hands. An armistice followed, and the Romans marched on to Seleucia, where they were received peacefully. Before long, however, a dispute arose, and in December A.D. 165 the legions stormed and burnt the city. Ctesiphon was also captured, and the palace of Vologeses destroyed.

The inactivity of the Parthians appears to have been partly due to a terrible epidemic of smallpox. The disease, at this time apparently unknown in the west, had been raging for more than a decade in the Kushān territories of India.¹ As a result of the great stimulus that the peace and prosperity of the Antonines had given to world trade, the scourge had spread along the trade routes to southern Arabia, to China, and of course also to Babylonia. During the sack of Seleucia, one of the Roman soldiers contracted the infection. Soon the epidemic was raging amongst the susceptible western soldiery, and the whole invading army was forced to retreat in confusion. The survivors carried the virus with them into the Roman empire, and so began the

¹ Bivar, "Hārītī and the chronology of the Kuṣāṇas", *BSOAS* xxxiii (1970), 20.

“Great Pestilence” that was studied by the physician Galen of Pergamum. Over a quarter of the urban population in some parts of the Roman empire perished, and there is much justification for the historians who believe that this disaster was the greatest single cause of the decline of Roman civilization. Later Roman campaigns against Edessa and Nisibis were accompanied by the added terror of the epidemic. However, as a consequence of the expeditions of A.D. 165 and 166, the Roman frontier was fixed on the line of the Jabal Sinjār, of the Chaboras (Khabur), and of Dura-Europos.

In September A.D. 191 Vologeses IV was replaced by a rival, currently numbered Vologeses V. In the Roman empire a contest for the throne was won by Septimius Severus, who followed his success with a campaign in northern Mesopotamia. Though diverted in A.D. 196 by the rebellion in Gaul of Clodius Albinus, he returned in A.D. 197, and performed the now traditional march down the Euphrates to Seleucia and Babylon. Ctesiphon, which was defended, was once more captured and sacked. In December A.D. 198 he assumed the title Parthicus Maximus; then he retreated, like Trajan, by way of Hatra, which was once more besieged without avail.

In A.D. 207/8 Vologeses V was succeeded by his son, Vologeses VI. It should be noted that the numbering of rulers with this name is increased by one since Le Rider's discovery of a new Vologeses II. Direct sources are lacking for the history of Parthia during the immediately following years. With the accession of Caracalla as Roman emperor in A.D. 211, plans for a further Roman invasion of Parthia were put in hand. The rulers of Osroene and of Armenia were arrested, and their kingdoms once more annexed as Roman provinces. Not long afterwards a further division took place of the Parthian kingdom. The brother of Vologeses VI established himself as an independent ruler, and he is thus designated Artabanus V.¹ Islamic sources know him as Ardavān. He appears to have been a stronger character than Vologeses VI, and from his seat in Media gained control both of Mesopotamia and in due course of Susa. However, the tetradrachm once ascribed to him by Longpérier is now shown to have been a specimen of Vologeses VI,² and no evidence remains that Artabanus V ever gained control of Seleucia. For the accession date of Artabanus

¹ Certain recent writers, including Sellwood (below, p. 280), have eliminated the first Artabanus, so that the last Arsacid ruler becomes Artabanus IV. For the present context, however, it seems clearer to retain the traditional numbering of the last ruler as Artabanus V.

² B. Simonetta, “A note on Vologeses V, Artabanus V and Artavasdes”, *NC* 1956, p. 80.

precise evidence exists, because of this ruler's historical connection with the religious leader Mānī, who was born on the eighth day of his fifth regnal year. A quotation given by the great Muslim scientist and astronomer al-Bīrūnī,¹ runs as follows: "Mānī states in the *Shāpūrakān* that he was born in the year 527 of the astronomers of Babylon, when four years had elapsed of the reign of Ardavān."

The date given here is to be converted according to the Babylonian form of the Seleucid era, so that the birth of Mānī must have occurred in A.D. 216 ($527 - 311 = 216$). The first year of Ardavān was accordingly the Seleucid year 523, and its Julian equivalent A.D. 212/3 ($523 - 311 = 212$). A limestone stele discovered at Susa bears a Parthian inscription attesting the rule there of Artabanus V only three years later, in the Arsacid year 462, equivalent to A.D. 215 ($462 - 247 = 215$).² The stone commemorates a certain Khwasak, satrap of Susa, and that the king in question is indeed Artabanus V is made certain by the fact that he is depicted wearing a forked beard, which appears also on some of the drachmae issued by this king.³

Caracalla, who claimed to have inspired the rivalry between Vologeses VI and Artabanus V, now began to concentrate Roman forces in Syria. He demanded the return of a runaway philosopher, Antiochus, and of Tiridates, perhaps an Armenian prince, on threat of war. Artabanus, however, avoided a crisis by returning the refugees. In A.D. 216 Caracalla, then resident at Antioch, sent a request to marry the daughter of Artabanus V. He may have planned to secure a claim to the Parthian succession, and to find a pretext for invasion if his suit were refused. Again Artabanus eventually agreed, and the emperor made a state visit to the Parthian court. Finally, according to the rather unreliable historical tradition, the Romans during the celebrations attacked the unsuspecting Parthians, and slaughtered many, though Artabanus made good his escape. Then the Roman army ravaged a large part of Media, captured the city of Arbela, and, so it is said, broke open the Parthian royal tombs and scattered the bones. While Artabanus retreated into the mountains to gather fresh forces, Caracalla was murdered on the road from Edessa to Carrhae. When Macrinus succeeded in A.D. 217 the Parthians invaded Mesopotamia, and defeated the Romans near Nisibis.

In the end, it was not to the Romans, for all their onslaughts, but

¹ Honigsmann and Maricq, *Recherches sur les 'Res gestae divi Saporis'*, p. 31; Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqīya*, ed. E. Sachau (Leipzig, 1876-8), p. 208.

² Henning, "The monuments and inscriptions of Tang-i Sarvak", *Asia Major* 11 (1952), 176.

³ Cf. p. 96, below.

to the new Iranian dynasty of the Sasanians that the Arsacid empire was to succumb. Ardashīr I, the dynamic heir to the kingdom of Persis, had subdued the neighbouring principalities, and aspired to overthrow his Arsacid overlord. According to the brief account of Dio Cassius, Artaxerxes (Ardashīr) fought altogether three battles against the Parthian, in all of which he was victorious. Neither the place nor the date of the final encounter, the celebrated battle of Hormizdagān, are yet precisely established, but the recent suggestion of Professor Widengren, that the battle took place north-west of Iṣfahān, on the route to Hamadān,¹ brings an interesting new point into the discussion. On this hypothesis, the encounter will have been close to the site of the Hellenistic battle between Eumenes and Antigonos in 317 B.C. Ṭabarī relates that in the final cavalry charge, Ardashīr slew Ardavān, his son Shāpūr slew the Parthian vizier, and the Persian page another Parthian opponent; and most authorities agree that the rock-sculptures of the Tang-Āb gorge near Fīrūzābād in Fārs depict this scene. Meanwhile at the mint of Seleucia Vologeses VI continued to issue his dated tetradrachm coinage until A.D. 222/3, thus reigning simultaneously with Artabanus.² There exist, however, at least two specimens of a tetradrachm issue apparently in all respects identical with those of Vologeses, but bearing the Seleucid date 539/A.D. 228/9. This date is usually placed after the final triumph of Ardashīr, and it is difficult at first sight to explain how a coinage of Vologeses VI could have been issued at Seleucia at such a late date. Earlier writers, following a suggestion of Longpérier, believed that the effigy on this coin showed a royal portrait with a forked beard, and must thus depict Artavasdes (Ardavazd), a son of Artabanus V. In his recent article, Simonetta has shown that the suggestion of a forked beard on the tetradrachm is no more than an illusion. In any event, coins with this feature are to be ascribed rather to Artabanus V than to Artavasdes.³

The only possible explanation of the latest Parthian tetradrachm seems thus to be that some sort of short-lived counter-revolution in favour of the Arsacids, and against the Sasanian conquerors, took place at Seleucia in A.D. 228/9. Whether Vologeses VI was still actually alive, or whether his coin-type was used posthumously, is at present uncertain. It is perhaps more than a coincidence that this remarkable episode

¹ *La Persia nel Medioevo*, pp. 739 ff.

² Simonetta, "Vologeses V, Artabanus V and Artavasdes", p. 81.

³ [Cf. Sellwood, p. 298, below.]

in Parthian history took place in exactly the same year as that of another decisive event in the career of the prophet Mānī. For according to al-Bīrūnī, Mānī received his first religious revelation, in his thirteenth year, and in the year 539 “of the astronomers of Babylon”, which is the same as 539 of the Seleucid era. Mānī claimed to be a descendant of a Parthian princely family; and his syncretic religious doctrine, containing elements of Mandaean belief, Iranian cosmogony, and even echoes of Christianity, may be regarded as a typical reflection of the mixed religious doctrines of the late Arsacid period, which the Zoroastrian orthodoxy of the Sasanians was soon to sweep away. The new creed can in some senses be visualized as a monument to the memory of the vanished dynasty, and it appears that several of the Sasanian kings regarded Mānī as a source of danger to their line. It may thus be admissible to speculate that a connection existed between the abortive Arsacid restoration at Seleucia in A.D. 228/9 and the revelation which descended upon the youthful Mānī at that time. The young prophet may well have been impressed at this desperate attempt to restore the ancient dynasty, and have then resolved to found a worldwide movement which would reassert Arsacid values in the spiritual sphere. Many years were to pass before the new creed was expounded in developed form, but Manichaeism can be seen as one of the last manifestations of Arsacid thought, its tinge of profound pessimism related to that dynasty’s loss of power. At the same time, the Manichaean scriptures have preserved to modern times, amongst their rich and varied linguistic heritage, evidence for the vocabulary and pronunciation of the Parthian language. These features are masked in the official Arsacid script by its complex ideographic writing system. In Babylonia, therefore, Manichaeism appears as the last heir of the Parthian tradition, though Armenia too preserved its legacy of Arsacid influence.

Appendix I. Chronological Table of the Arsacid Kings of Parthia

B.C.	New chronology	B.C.	Old chronology	B.C.
247	ARSACID era begins	c. 250	ARSACES (Aršaka; Parth. 'ršk)	SELEUCIDS
246	ANDRAGORAS autonomous as satrap	c. 248	TIRIDATES I (Tīridāta)	246 Death of Antiochus II
238	ARSACES I leads revolt in N. Parthia			228 SELEUCUS II invades Parthia
217 or 214	ARSACES I in control of Parthia			223 ANTIOCHUS III
	ARSACES II	211	ARTABANUS I (Artapāna; Parth. 'rtbnn)	{ 209 Eastern campaign of ANTIOCHUS III
c. 191	PHRIAPITES, PRIAPATIUS (Parth. <i>pryptk</i>)	[<i>Agreed chronology</i>]		187 SELEUCUS IV
c. 176	PHRAATES I (Frahāta; Parth. <i>prdt</i>)			175 ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES
c. 171	MITHRADATES I (Mithradāta: Parth. <i>mtrdt</i>)			165 ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES in Iran
148/7	Mithradates takes Ecbatana (Hamadān)			164 ANTIOCHUS IV dies at Isfahan
c. 139/8	PHRAATES II			TIMARCHUS at Hamadan
c. 127	ARTABANUS I	138/7	PHRAATES II	162 DEMETRIUS I
∞ c. 124/3	MITHRADATES II	c. 128	ARTABANUS II	150 ALEXANDER BALAS
c. 90	GOTARZES I (Godarz; Parth. <i>gwtrz</i>)	c. 123	MITHRADATES II	145 DEMETRIUS II
	ORODES I	c. 91	GOTARZES I	141 DEMETRIUS II captured by the
		80	ORODES I	Parthians in Media
78 or 77	SINATRUCES	76/7 ∞	SINATRUCES	139 ANTIOCHUS VII SIDETES
71 or 70	PHRAATES III	58/7	MITHRADATES III	129 ANTIOCHUS VII invades Media
58/7	ORODES II (Urūd/Viroy: Parth. <i>wrwd</i> ; Pahl. <i>wyrwd</i> , <i>wylwd</i> -)	c. 57	ORODES II	and is killed in battle
before 53	MITHRADATES III (struck coins at Seleucia)			
c. 39	PACORUS I	38	Death of PACORUS I	END OF SELEUCID RULE IN
	Death of PACORUS I			IRAN AND BABYLONIA
	Death of ORODES II			
c. 40	PHRAATES IV		PHRAATES IV	
	32-30 Invasion by TIRIDATES		30-25 TIRIDATES II	
	27/6 TIRIDATES strikes coins at Seleucia			
3/2	PHRAATACES (PHRAATES V)			

A.D.	New chronology	A.D.	Old chronology
<i>Commencement of Christian era</i>			
5/6	ORODES III issues tetradrachms at Seleucia.	4	ORODES III
8/9	VONONES I	7/8	VONONES I
10/11	ARTABANUS II (Ardavān; Parth. <i>'rtbnw</i> ; Pahl. <i>'rtw'n</i>)	12	ARTABANUS III
36	TIRIDATES II (no coins) ('Tirdād; Parth. <i>tyrydt</i>)	36	TIRIDATES III
37	CINNAMUS (no coins)	37	CINNAMUS
39-45	VARDANES (Parth. <i>wrdn</i> ; Pahl. <i>wrd'n</i>)	38	GOTARZES II
43/4-50/1	GOTARZES II	39-47/8	VARDANES
50/1-76/7	VOLOGESES I	c. 51	VONONES II
or 79	(Parth. <i>wlgšy</i>)	51/2-79/80	VOLOGESES I
55	VARDANES II		
77/8-78/9	VOLOGESES II		
77/8-86/7	PACORUS II	78-115/6	PACORUS II
79/80-80/1	ARTABANUS III	80-1	ARTABANUS IV
92/3-95/6	PACORUS II		
104/5-107/8	VOLOGESES III	105/6-147	VOLOGESES II
108/9-127/8	OSROES (Khusrau)	109/10-128/9	OSROES
-c. 110	PACORUS II		
111/12-46/7	VOLOGESES III		
117	PARTHAMASPATES (no coins)	117	PARTHAMASPATES
c. 130-147	MITHRADATES IV (not at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris)	128/9-147?	MITHRADATES IV
147/8-190/1	VOLOGESES IV	148-192	VOLOGESES III
190/1-207/7	VOLOGESES V	191-207/8	VOLOGESES IV
207/8-221/2	VOLOGESES VI	207/8-222/3	VOLOGESES V
c. 213-c. 224	ARTABANUS IV (not at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris)	c. 213-c. 224	ARTABANUS V
		c. 227-228/9	ARTAVASDES

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The abbreviations used in the bibliographies and footnotes are listed below.

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i> (Beiblatt zum Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts) (Berlin)
<i>AAWG</i>	<i>Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen</i> (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Göttingen)
<i>AAntASH</i>	<i>Acta antiqua academiae scientiarum Hungaricae</i> (Budapest)
<i>AArchASH</i>	<i>Acta archaeologica academiae scientiarum Hungaricae</i> (Budapest)
<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i> (Brussels)
<i>Acta Iranica</i>	<i>Acta Iranica</i> (encyclopédie permanente des études iraniennes) (Tehran-Liège-Leiden)
<i>Aevum</i>	<i>Aevum</i> (Rassegna di Scienze Storiche Linguistiche e Filologiche) (Milan)
<i>AGWG</i>	<i>Abhandlungen der (königlichen) Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen</i> (Berlin)
<i>AI</i>	<i>Ars Islamica</i> = <i>Ars Orientalis</i> (Ann Arbor, Mich.)
<i>AION</i>	<i>Annali: Istituto Orientale di Napoli</i> (s.l. sezione linguistica; n.s. new series) (Naples)
<i>AJSLL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i> (Chicago)
<i>AKM</i>	<i>Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i> (Leipzig)
<i>AMI</i>	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i> (old series 9 vols 1929-38; new series 1968-) (Berlin)
<i>Anatolia</i>	<i>Anatolia</i> (revue annuelle d'archéologie) (Ankara)
<i>ANS</i>	American Numismatic Society
<i>ANSMN</i>	<i>American Numismatic Society Museum Notes</i> (New York)
<i>ANSNM</i>	American Numismatic Society Numismatic Notes and Monographs (New York)
<i>ANSNS</i>	American Numismatic Society Numismatic Studies (New York)
<i>Antiquity</i>	<i>Antiquity</i> (a periodical review of archaeology edited by Glyn Daniel) (Cambridge)
<i>AO</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia</i> (ediderunt Societates Orientales Batava Danica Norvegica Svedica) (Copenhagen)
<i>AOAW</i>	<i>Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
<i>AOH</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i> (Budapest)
<i>APAW</i>	<i>Abhandlungen der Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Berlin)
<i>Apollo</i>	<i>Apollo</i> (The magazine of the arts) (London)
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archiv Orientalní</i> (Quarterly Journal of African, Asian and Latin American Studies) (Prague)
<i>Artibus Asiae</i>	<i>Artibus Asiae</i> (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University) (Dresden, Ascona)

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- ASIR* *Archaeological Survey of India*. Reports made during the years 1862- by Alexander Cunningham, 23 vols. Simla-Calcutta, 1871-87.
- BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (Baltimore, Maryland)
- BCH* *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* (Athens-Paris)
- BCMA* *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, Ohio)
- BEFEO* *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* (Hanoi-Paris)
- Berytus* *Berytus* (archaeological studies published by the Museum of Archaeology and the American University of Beirut) (Copenhagen)
- BMQ* *British Museum Quarterly* (London)
- BSO(A)S* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies* (University of London)
- Byzantion* *Byzantion* (Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines) (Brussels)
- CAH* *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 12 vols; 1st edition 1924-39 (Cambridge) (Revised edition 1970-)
- Caucasica* *Caucasica* (Zeitschrift für die Erforschung der Sprachen und Kulturen des Kaukasus und Armeniens) 10 fascs (Leipzig, 1924-34)
- CII* *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Oxford)
- CIIr* *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* (London)
- CRAI* *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* (Paris)
- CSCO* *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Paris, Louvain)
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna)
- DOAW* *Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
- East and West* *East and West* (Quarterly published by the Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orient) (Rome)
- EI* *Epigraphia Indica* (Calcutta)
- Eos* *Eos* (Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum) (Bratislava-Warsaw)
- EPRO* *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain* (Leiden)
- Eranos* *Eranos* (Acta Philologica Suecana) (Uppsala)
- ERE* *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, 13 vols (Edinburgh, 1908-21)
- GCS* *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig, Berlin)
- Georgica* *Georgica* (a journal of Georgian and Caucasian studies) nos. 1-5 (London, 1935-7)
- GJ* *The Geographical Journal* (London)

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- Gnomon* *Gnomon* (Kritische Zeitschrift für die gesamte klassische Altertumswissenschaft) (Munich)
- Hellenica* *Hellenica* (recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques) (Paris)
- Historia* *Historia* (Journal of Ancient History) (Wiesbaden)
- HJAS* *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.)
- HO* *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. B. Spuler (Leiden-Cologne)
- HOS* *Harvard Oriental Series* (Cambridge, Mass.)
- IA* *Iranica Antiqua* (Leiden)
- IJJ* *Indo-Iranian Journal* (The Hague)
- IndAnt* *The Indian Antiquary*, 62 vols (Bombay, 1872-1933)
- Iran* *Iran* (journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies) (London-Tehran)
- Iraq* *Iraq* (journal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq) (London)
- JA* *Journal Asiatique* (Paris)
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (New York)
- JASB* *Journal (and proceedings) of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta)
- JASBB* *Journal of the Asiatic Society Bombay Branch* (Bombay)
- JCOI* *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute*, 29 vols (Bombay, 1922-35)
- JCS* *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* (New Haven, Conn.)
- JESHO* *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (Leiden)
- JHS* *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (London)
- JMBRAS* *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore)
- JNES* *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (Chicago)
- JNSI* *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* (Bombay)
- JRAS* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London)
- JRS* *The Journal of Roman Studies* (London)
- Kairos* *Kairos* (Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie) (Salzburg)
- Klio* *Klio* (Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte) (Berlin)
- Kuml* *Kuml* (Aarbog for Jysk Arkaeologisk Selskab) (Aarhus)
- KSIIIMK* *Kratkie soobshcheniya o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniyakh Instituta istorii materialnoi kultury AN SSR* (Moscow)
- KZ* *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*, begründet von Adalbert Kuhn (Göttingen)
- LCL* Loeb Classical Library
- MDAFA* Mémoires de la délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (Paris)
- Mesopotamia* *Mesopotamia* (Rivista di Archeologia, Faculta di Lettere e filosofia) (University of Turin)
- MMAB* *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (old series 1905-42; new series 1942-) (New York)

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- MMP *Monuments et Mémoires* (publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres) (Fondation Eugène Piot, Paris)
- Le Muséon *Le Muséon* (Revue d'Études Orientales) (Louvain-Paris)
- Museum *Museum* (art magazine edited by the Tokyo National Museum) (Tokyo)
- NC *Numismatic Chronicle* (London)
- NGWG *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Göttingen)
- Numismatica *Numismatica* (Rome)
- OLZ *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* (Berlin-Leipzig)
- Oriens *Oriens* (journal of the International Society for Oriental Research) (Leiden)
- Orientalia *Orientalia* (a quarterly published by the Faculty of Ancient Oriental Studies, Pontifical Biblical Institute) new series (Rome)
- Pauly *Pauly, A. Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (ed. G. Wissowa) (Stuttgart, 1894-)
- PBA *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London)
- Philologus *Philologus* (Zeitschrift für das klassische Altertum) (Stolberg, etc., now Berlin)
- PO *Patrologia Orientalis* (ed. R. Gaffin and F. Nau) (Paris)
- RAA *Revue des arts asiatiques* (Paris)
- RAC *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* (ed. T. Klauser) (Stuttgart, 1950-)
- REA *Revue des études arméniennes, nouvelle série* (Paris)
- Religion *Religion* (A Journal of Religion and Religions) (Newcastle upon Tyne)
- RGG *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., 6 vols (Tübingen, 1927-32); 3rd ed., 7 vols (Tübingen, 1957-65)
- RHR *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (Paris)
- RIN *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini* (Milan)
- RN *Revue Numismatique* (Paris)
- RSO *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (Rome)
- Saeculum *Saeculum* (Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte) (Freiburg-Munich)
- SBE *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford)
- SCBO *Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford)
- Semitica *Semitica* (Cahiers publiés par l'Institut d'Études Sémitiques de l'Université de Paris) (Paris)
- SHAW *Sitzungsberichte der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Heidelberg)
- SPA *A Survey of Persian Art*, ed. A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman, 6 vols (Text pp. 1-2817) (Oxford-London-New York, 1938-39); repr. 12 vols (Tokyo, 1964-65); no vol. XIII; vol. XIV *New Studies 1938-1960* (Text pp. 2879-3205) (Oxford-London, 1967); vol. XV *Bibliography of Pre-Islamic Persian Art to 1938* (cols 1-340), Reprint of *Index to Text Volumes I-III (i-vi)*

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- SPAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Berlin)
- StIr* *Studia Iranica* (Leiden)
- Sumer* *Sumer* (journal of archaeology and history in Iraq) (Baghdad)
- SWAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener (Österreichischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
- Syria* *Syria* (Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie) (Paris)
- TITAKE* *Trudi Iuzhno-Turkmenistanskoi Archeologicheskoi Kimpleknoi Ekspeditsii*, 6 vols (Moscow, 1949-58)
- TM* *Travaux et mémoires* (Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance) (Paris)
- T'oung Pao* *T'oung Pao* (Archives concernant l'histoire, les langues, la géographie, l'ethnographie et les arts de l'Asie orientale) (Leiden)
- TPS* *Transactions of the Philological Society* (London)
- VDI* *Vestnik drevnei istorii* (Moscow)
- WVDOG* *Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* (Leipzig)
- WZKM* *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (Vienna)
- YCS* *Yale Classical Studies* (New Haven, Conn.)
- ZA* *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* (Berlin)
- ZDMG* *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden)
- ZN* *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* (Berlin)

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CHAPTER 2

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Note. A full bibliography of Classical notices on Parthia is liable to be cumbersome, since the brief references are scattered through the pages of longer works primarily concerned with other topics. Only the principal authorities are listed here. A selection of more detailed references will be found in the footnotes. Most of these texts are printed in numerous editions.

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(ii) Latin

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(b) *Monographs*

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